World Soccer®

ONE WORLD, ONE GAME

JULY 2009 £3.70
www.worldsoccer.com

CONFEDERATIONS CUP Brazil's summer challenge

HIDDINK "Why I had to leave Chelsea"

PEREZ Revolution at Real Madrid

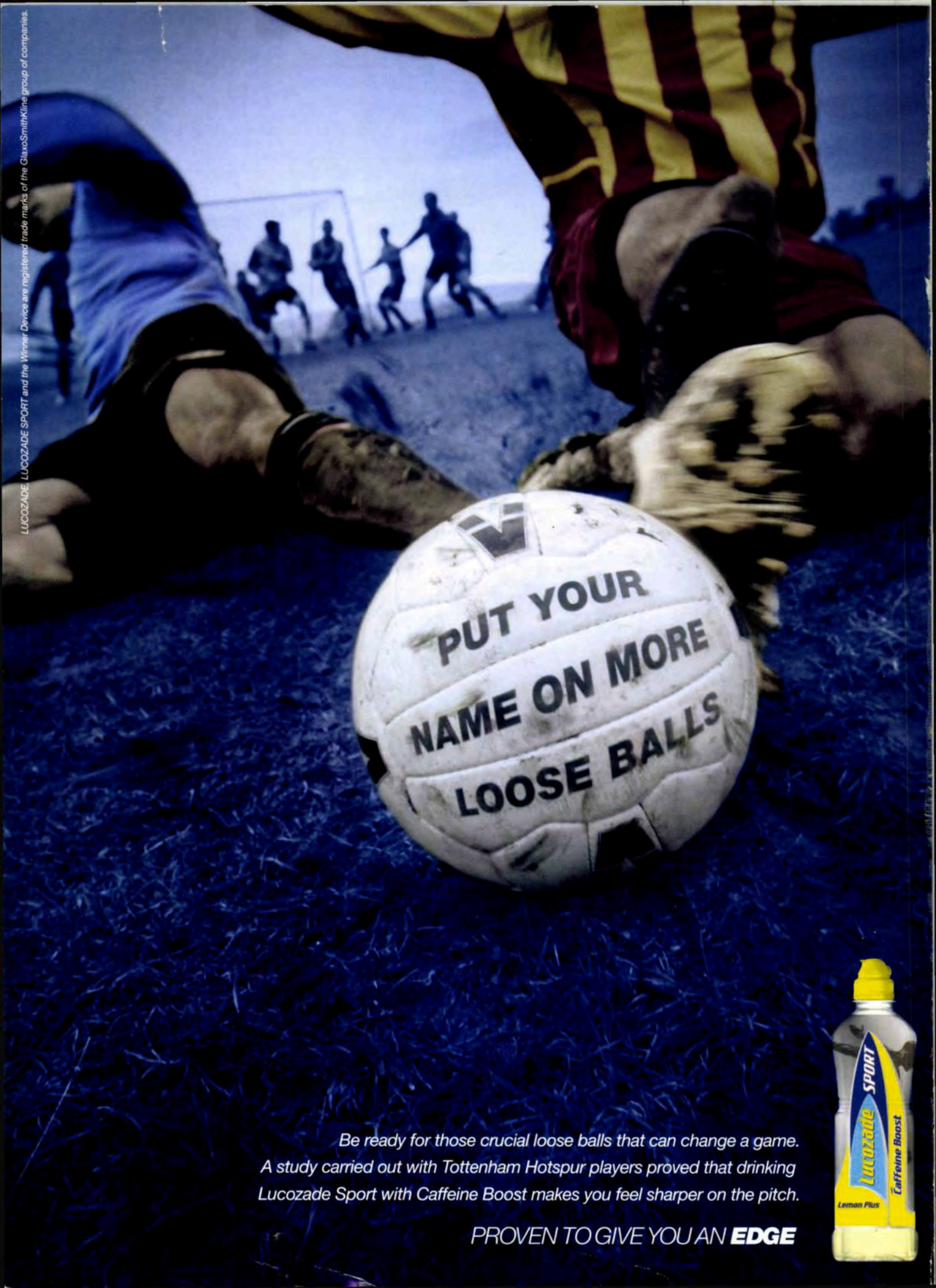
END-OF-SEASON SPECIAL

CHAMPIONS!

Europe's elite celebrate in style

Barca, Inter, United head the all-star cast

EXPORT Printed in the UK
Australia $9.95 USA $7.99


PUT YOUR
NAME ON MORE
LOOSE BALLS
Be ready for those crucial loose balls that can change a game.
A study carried out with Tottenham Hotspur players proved that drinking
Lucozade Sport with Caffeine Boost makes you feel sharper on the pitch.
PROVEN TO GIVE YOU AN EDGE
Lucozade
SPORT
Caffeine Boost
Lemon Plus
LUCOZADE, LUCOZADE SPORT and the Winner Device are registered trade marks of the GlaxoSmithKline group of companies.

July 2009

ASIDE FROM Chelsea fans and the odd Florida-based investor-speculator, there can't be many people who didn't appreciate Barcelona's breathtaking Champions League Final victory over Manchester United.

There we were worrying that modern football was becoming too defensive, too negative, too cynical, too dominated by Premier League avarice. Then along come Messi, Xavi, Iniesta and friends to prove there is a footballing God after all.

Barca tick all the boxes for the progressive football follower: the attacking philosophy, the commitment to youth development, the Unicef sponsorship. But it is not all sweetness and light in Catalonia. Life is easier when you can call upon financial support from sympathetic Catalan banks, not to mention a whopping TV deal that rewards Barca and Real Madrid at the expense of other Spanish Liga clubs.

FC Barcelona is an intensely political beast – witness president Joan Laporta muscling in to lead the team up to collect their medals from Michel Platini in Rome. That political dimension has brought its own problems of in-fighting and short-termism down the years, and past teams have suffered as a result.

But we can all recognise footballing beauty when we see it, and Barca deserve our thanks and praise for their performances in Rome and throughout the 2008-09 season.

Thanks also to everybody who has been in touch with positive feedback regarding the recent changes to the magazine. This month, the new format allows us to review some of Europe's lesser leagues in greater detail, from Albania to Wales, and plenty of places in between.

There'll be more European league reviews next month. In the meantime, you can read extra Dispatches from the likes of Argentina, Denmark, Portugal, Serbia, Scotland and others at our website worldsoccer.com

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com

CONTENTS

COVER STORY

CHAMPIONS!

22 Masters of the universe
The full story of Barcelona's victory over Manchester United in the 2009 Champions League Final in Rome

28 Shakhtar's glory
A first victory for Ukraine in the last-ever UEFA Cup Final

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

4 **...in pictures** the global game caught on camera
8 **Brian Glanville** on Chelsea's Norwegian nemesis, an MEP's misguided campaign, Andy Burnham's expenses and Arsenal's defensive woes
11 **Paul Gardner** on the need for transparency from the IFAB
12 **David Conn** on the paradox at the heart of Manchester United

HEADLINERS

16 **People in the news**
Andres Iniesta, Florentino Perez, Miroslav Blazevic and coaches on the move in Europe

INSIDE FOOTBALL

20 **Keir Radnedge** on why Michel Platini holds the trump card for England's 2018 World Cup bid

DISPATCHES

30 **The big stories from our correspondents**
Spain, Germany, England, Ukraine, Iraq, Asia, Austria, Mexico, Greece, Africa, USA, Brazil, Kosovo, Italy

SIX OF THE BEST

54 **League champions**

CONFEDERATIONS CUP

56 **Dress rehearsal** Mark Gleeson sets the scene for the World Cup warm-up
60 **Group A** South Africa, Iraq, New Zealand, Spain
62 **Group B** Brazil, Egypt, Italy, USA

FACE TO FACE

64 Outgoing Chelsea boss **Guus Hiddink**
66 South Africa coach **Joel Santana**

TALENT SCOUT

68 **Tomorrow's stars today**
Tomas Necid, Juan Daniel Forlin

MEMORIES

70 **Stanley Matthews**
The wing wizard remembered

SOCCER CITIES

74 **Gothenburg** Stadiums, history, what to see

WORLD SERVICE

83 **The ultimate global news and results section**
Internationals results
Digest Libertadores Cup, African Champions League, Asian Champions League, CONCACAF Champions League, European league reviews
Club football results from Europe, South America, North & Central America, Africa, Asia, Oceania

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

114 **Who said what and why**

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

SAVE MONEY ON WorldSoccer
SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER ON PAGE 52

...IN PICTURES

The global game caught on camera

Flying high...Pep Guardiola gets the treatment from his joyful Barcelona squad after their Champions League triumph in Rome

HENRY
14
XAVI
6
13
PEDRO
27

Pain in Spain...Bilbao's Etxeberria is consoled after defeat in the Spanish Cup Final

Party time...players and fans of Mainz celebrate promotion to the Bundesliga

Ouch...Grampus' Yuki is fouled in the Asian Champions League against Guoan

No way through...despite Werder Bremen defending in numbers, they could not prevent Shakhtar Donetsk from winning the UEFA Cup in Istanbul

Relegation stinks...for Alan Shearer and Newcastle United

Four to Porto...a fourth consecutive title for the boys from the Dragao

Brian Glanville ...on Chelsea's Norwegian nemesis...an MEP's misguided campaign... Andy Burnham's expenses...and Arsenal's defensive woes

Never mind the Ballacks...referee Ovrebo ignores the German midfielder's histrionics

THE thing is, you have to get a cough, and if you don't get a cough, you ain't got nothing. And goodness knows, in this context, I do know what I am talking about since, back in the 1970s, I spent years with Keith Botsford on behalf of the *Sunday Times* investigating the bribery, or attempted bribery, of European referees by the big Italian clubs, with grisly revelations and minimal results.

I was at Stamford Bridge to see Chelsea, you might say, "refereed" out of the Champions League semi-finals by a pitiful referee in the Norwegian Tom Henning Ovrebo, who might well have awarded Chelsea three or four penalties. Sharply in my mind was the first-half moment when Alves so graphically fouled Malouda just inside the right side of the Spanish penalty box, only for Ovrebo, who seemed perfectly placed, to give no penalty. For those in west London with long memories, Ovrebo must be the most unpopular Norwegian since that arch collaborator Quisling.

But was he corrupted? Did he act in bad faith, rather than out of ineptitude? If you think so, as thousands of Chelsea fans appear to, prove it. And at least, however maltreated he was by Chelsea players, notably Michael Ballack and an hysterical Didier Drogba, none of them kicked him off the field, all the way back to the dressing rooms, as Liverpool's hard nut, Tommy Smith, kicked the outrageous referee Ortiz De Mendibil at San Siro in May 1965, after he'd effectively refereed Liverpool out of the European Cup semi-finals against Internazionale.

Meanwhile, Guus Hiddink, a man of philosophical bent, might reflect that what goes around comes around. Against Barcelona at the Bridge, he and Chelsea were the victims of atrocious refereeing. But back in the 2002 World Cup, the South Korean team which he so shrewdly managed benefited from similarly appalling decisions, first against Italy in the second round, then against Spain in the quarter-finals.

Though there were outcries of conspiracy both from the Italians, hardly a surprise, and the Spaniards, and though they may or may not have had some substance – again, not a cough to be heard – you can be sure that Hiddink himself would have had nothing to do with it. But in extra-time of the Italy game, Bobo Vieri was denied a perfectly good goal for a non-existent offside and the Italians, who in fact should have won the match at a canter, finally succumbed in extra time to a goal by Ahn.

Against the Spaniards, in Gwangju, the Koreans benefited no fewer than three times from bizarre decisions. Why did the Egyptian referee, Gamal Al Ghandour, disallow what looked a perfectly good headed goal by Ivan Helguera, from De Pedro's free-kick? Why, in extra time, did he rule out another headed goal, this time by Fernando Morientes, from Joaquin's right-wing cross, on the dubious insistence of his linesman, Michael Ragoonath, who inexplicably ruled that the ball had crossed the goal line before it reached Morientes. Then, to add insult to injuries, when Joaquin took what proved to be the fatal penalty kick in the shoot-out, why was the Korean keeper allowed to come well off his line to save?

No coughs, no sequel.

NONE of which excuses the cheap opportunism of an MEP called Richard Corbett who, on the verge of the European parliamentary elections, has instigated a petition, apparently endorsed by 16,000 birdbrains, to open an inquest on the 1973 European Cup-winners Cup Final in Salonica, between Leeds United and Milan, in which Leeds were so clearly robbed by the appalling refereeing of Christos Michas, the Greek official.

"Did the referee act in bad faith, rather than out of ineptitude? If so, prove it"

Michas never got another European game, though that was as far as it went. But if the egregious Corbett really wanted a better target – however cynically – in a big game where Leeds were involved why did he not chose the European Cup Final of 1975 when Leeds were so blatantly refused the clearest of first-half penalties by the French referee, Kitabdjian, when Franz Beckenbauer so obviously fouled Allan Clarke in the box, a photograph of which dominated the front page of

Last game...Michas never took charge of a European game again after 1973

L'Equipe the following day?

That morning, I spoke to Artemio Franchi, then the president of UEFA, at the Crillon Hotel in Paris, where he told me that the referees' committee had awarded Kitabdjian two marks out of a possible 20.

But again, there was no sequel. Didn't the opportunist Corbett know about that. He might even have gone for a (no) win double.

THERE'S a German proverb that translates as "God punished all small sinners immediately". It might serve in the case of another pipsqueak politician, Andy Burnham, who glories in the title of culture secretary, and a few other things besides.

How overjoyed he must have been

Read all about it...Burnham

to have seen his fatuous demands, that the Premier League should share out its £11billion take more evenly among its clubs, which should have smaller squads with a minimum of English players, became the front-page lead story on *The Times*.

How Burnham must have preened himself. But not for long. Indeed, not for more than a single day.

Because the very next morning, there he was, prominently pilloried for demanding £16,500 expenses for the "purchase and renovation of a London flat". Three times he was refused, but still the gallant fellow persisted, until, at last, the fees office, or whatever, caved in and let him have his money, after he had pleaded with them, jokingly of course, that otherwise, he might be involved in a divorce. If at first you don't succeed...

He claims, by the way, to be an Everton supporter. I'm sure Everton are proud.

WATCHING Arsenal give away seven goals in two games at the Emirates recently – against Manchester United and Chelsea – you had to admire the undimmed optimism of Arsene Wenger, who asserted after the 4-1 thrashing by Chelsea that this wasn't the correct score and that Arsenal could have led 2-0.

Well, first of all, of course it was the correct score, because statistics are statistics. But equally, the Gunners, as admitted by Chelsea's Guus Hiddink himself, did play well for the first 20 minutes and could well have had a goal or two. Instead, they gave away a bevy of embarrassing goals.

In Poland's Fabianski they have a second-choice keeper who, as we have seen before, is simply not equal to the task. Though weak marking by the veteran Silvestre – an off buy and a strange choice at centre-back – facilitated the goal headed against the play, by Alex from a free-kick, couldn't Fabianski have done better? And although when Anelka – the immutable law of the ex illustrated once again – was given far too much room and space to score Chelsea's second, Fabianski might arguably have done more to prevent it.

Alan Hansen, in particular, damned Arsenal's defensive weakness in midfield, yet, on a better day, surely Alexandre Song, a defensive midfielder by inclination, could do more than this. A Tony Adams figure might have driven them back into the game, their spine restored. There wasn't one. ●

GOALS
WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN...

Sensational...Ronaldo

1 Ronaldo, Corinthians v Santos
Flicked the ball behind his left leg to beat his marker and then chipped the keeper from 22yards

2 Martin Palermo, Boca v Tachira
Left-foot bicycle kick into the bottom corner following a volleyed pass

3 Cristian Bolanos, Start v Tromso
Chested down a pass before volleying into the far top corner

4 Cristiano Ronaldo, Manchester United v Arsenal
Backheel to Park, then a two-thirds-of-the-pitch sprint to finish from Wayne Rooney's cross

Special...Palermo

5 Nilmar, Internacional v Corinthians
Dribbled past six opponents before checking back and side-footing past the keeper

AND ONE TO FORGET...

Kim Nam-Il, Vissel Kobe v Nagoya Grampus
The Vissel midfielder's attempted back pass from near the halfway line looped over his own keeper

Shocking...Kim

To see clips of these goals, visit www.worldsoccer.com

NUMBERS GAME

5
Brazilians in Shakhtar Donetsk's starting line-up for the UEFA Cup Final

6.8million
euros originally awarded by FIFA to Shakhtar Donetsk after Brazilian midfielder Matuzalem unilaterally broke his contract and joined Real Zaragoza in July 2007

11,858,934
euros that the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) last month ordered Matuzalem to pay Shakhtar after the Ukrainian club appealed to CAS

54
league goals scored by Wolfburg's Grafite and Edin Dzeko in 2008-09, making them the most prolific partnership in Bundesliga history

15
players on wages of more than £50,000 a week at relegated Newcastle

1
game won by Alan Shearer in his eight-match spell as Newcastle manager

640,000
tickets on sale for the Confederations Cup in South Africa

REPORTS we couldn't make up

SHIPSHAPE AND RED BULL FASHION

New York Red Bulls played a friendly six-a-side match against a US navy team last month. The venue? The deck of the USS Intrepid. The game was held to coincide with Fleet Week New York, an annual celebration of all things nautical.

LONG BALL GAME

More than 600 competitors took part in the second edition of the world table-soccer championships in Eaubonne, outside Paris. The event was organised by the French table-soccer federation.

Keep it on the deck...New York Red Bulls' Mike Petke enjoys the Navy lark

Spot the ball...table-soccer in full swing

RUMOURS we'd like to believe

- Schalke want Shakhtar's Brazilian midfielder Jadson *(Kicker)*.
- Bayern Munich are keen on bringing in Schalke keeper Manuel Neuer *(Bild)*.
- Paris Saint-Germain and national team keeper Mickael Landreau is on the verge of leaving the French capital. Monaco and Galatasaray head the queue *(L'Equipe)*.
- Marseille are interested in Anderlecht playmaker Mbark Boussoufa. So are Lyon *(Le Parisien)*.
- Fenerbahce's Spanish striker Daniel Guiza is being watched by Everton *(Fanatik)*.
- Fiorentina are preparing a £8million bid for promising Valladolid keeper Sergio Asenjo *(Giornale di Toscana)*.
- Ronaldinho is looking to relaunch his career at Napoli (Various).
- Roma midfielder Daniele De Rossi is on the Real Madrid shopping list *(Sky Italia)*.
- Zenit St Petersburg will make an offer for Ricardo Quaresma, the Portuguese winger who was on loan at Chelsea from Internazionale *(Sport-Express)*.

Everton interest...Guiza

Madrid target...De Rossi

Paul Gardner

Let me make this clear

FOLLOWING ITS meeting earlier this year, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) will shortly be issuing the new rule book for the 2009-10 season. Anything "new" in the rules is identified with a vertical line in the margin. So far so good. But what is not so good is that deletions from the rules are not identified.

At its 2008 meeting, IFAB undertook, at FIFA's request, a revision and rewording of the rules. It was designed to "simplify and disambiguate the current wording", and, said FIFA: "No major changes in content are planned." This was rather less than the truth, because the published 2008-09 rules featured a significant deletion.

A clause that had been part of the rules since 1994 was no longer present. Rule 12 had included, under the category "A direct free-kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences...", the following wording: "...when tackling, an opponent makes contact with the opponent before contact is made with the ball..."

Not any more. The clause had disappeared. What this surreptitious change did was to legitimise the claim invariably made by loutish tacklers after they have demolished an opponent: "I got the ball, ref!"

Taking him out...acceptable under new rules?

The implication of IFAB's action was unmistakable. They had a ruling that clattering into opponents before getting the ball was a foul. The deletion of that wording could only mean this was now acceptable.

This was a huge and retrograde change. It greatly reduced protection from dangerous tackling that players surely have a right to expect, especially the skilled players. This was a change that might well "disambiguate" a few players straight into a hospital bed.

"Thugs' charter"

And what would be the reason for the change, this "thugs' charter" measure? As the change itself was shrouded in secrecy, there is no hope of getting an explanation from IFAB. One was left with the suspicion that it was made to "simplify" the referees' job.

And was this change the only deletion? The uncertainty was a product of the way in which referees operate, as though they live in the High Middle Ages and are some superior cabal of lawmakers – their absurd insistence on using that word "law" says quite a lot about their archaic attitude – who do not feel obliged to explain their actions.

During Euro 2008 we had a perfect example of that when we were told a bizarre ruling on the famous Ruud Van Nistelrooy goal against Italy was OK because that was the way that referees interpreted the rules. Who knew? The incident was not covered in the rule book, so the referees had concocted an interpretation, omitted to tell anyone else – and then sprung it upon a bewildered public and an aggrieved Italy team.

So, even at the point where the referees are at their most public – during matches – they tend to hide behind secrecy. Every game features calls that remain obscure because the referee is not obliged – as he should be – to clearly signal what he has called.

I have been urging the adoption of a comprehensive set of signals for decades now. Evidently, these things take time. Another of my helpful suggestions that has also got nowhere is to have the rule book indexed. Should you doubt the need for one and have a couple of hours to spare, you may wish to try the following.

> "How can it be justified having the game's rules decided by a somnolent clique?"

Suppose you need to know, with total authority, what the six-yard box is for. To be absolutely certain that you're covering every possible angle, you're going to have to meticulously read every single word of the rules and of the attached interpretations. That means digesting some 120 pages of detailed prose. Quite a chore – made even more frustrating when you finally discover the six-yard box, the goal area, has no function at all.

The same chore awaits anyone who may suspect that the 2009-10 rules may feature omissions. They will not be indexed or marked in any way.

Frankly, there are just too many deficiencies that reveal IFAB as unsatisfactory in its present state. What possible justification is there for having the vital function of deciding on the game's rules put in the hands of a somnolent clique that includes permanent representatives from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but no guaranteed presence from countries that really matter, like Brazil, Germany, Argentina, Italy or Spain?

This creaky, cobwebbed committee is a relic of bygone days. It should be replaced by a new body that is truly representative of the worldwide game, probably with full-time staff, that meets more than twice a year, and openly discusses the major issues and problems of the sport. If that means a PR officer, so be it. The new body should do away, once and for all, with the secrecy and the hocus pocus that still surrounds referees and their activities.

The IFAB need a new approach, and one that should ring a few bells with Sepp Blatter – transparency.

David Conn

The paradox at the heart of United

YOU COULD argue that the crucial moment in a dramatic, absorbing English domestic season happened in a Champions League match. As English clubs asserted their dominance over the competition again, Manchester United drew Arsenal in the semi-final, and went to the second leg at the Emirates Stadium only 1-0 up.

Yet Arsene Wenger's young team's epochal chance to eclipse United was shredded within eight minutes. The moment had a cruel, decisive clarity to it; Cristiano Ronaldo sent in a scudding cross for which Kieran Gibbs, Arsenal's 19-year-old left-back, had to check himself. Instead, Gibbs lost his legs completely and, while he was in a tangle of young limbs on the floor, Park Ji-sung finished neatly and Arsenal were on their way to annihilation.

Wenger's strategy, to pin his faith in youth and eschew the inflated transfer market he so distrusts, was mercilessly exposed. His is still a side brimming with skill and style, but the argument has now concluded: he needs more experience.

Manchester United, by contrast, are an almost perfect blend. Constructed with consummate skill by Alex Ferguson, the squad – with an average age of 27 – marries the exuberance of Wayne Rooney and Ronaldo to the experience of Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs. Even Rio Ferdinand, once English football's wild child, is now 30.

Ferguson, in short, has done it again. Once repeatedly pipped by Wenger, then outfought by Jose Mourinho at Chelsea while reconstructing, now, fully seven years after he was due to retire but thought better of it, Ferguson has claimed superiority with a squad so deep in talent it looks unshakeable for years.

Wenger, we now know, can win nothing with kids alone. Guus Hiddink acknowledged that Chelsea do not have ready replacements for players approaching their career autumns. Liverpool ran United closest, but rely heavily on Steven Gerrard and Fernando Torres which, quite apart from the propensity of that pair to injuries, is a dependence on key individuals which Ferguson does not have.

Manchester United have a dynasty again, and it has all happened under the ownership of Florida-based tycoon Malcolm Glazer, whose 2005 takeover, fronted by his sons Joel and Avram, was so bitterly opposed by most United fans. The Glazers were shown, in the United accounts published weeks before the Premier League victory, to have drained the club of millions of pounds in interest again.

The economics of United have to be picked through via a nest of companies which now own the club: Red Football Joint Venture Limited, Red Football Shareholder Limited, Red Football Limited, under the umbrella of Red Football General Partner Inc, a company the Glazers have registered in the low-tax state of Nevada, home to the gambling capital of the world, Las Vegas. The accounts showed that last year, when United won the Premier League and Champions League, the world's most formidable football corporation made £256million.

Of that – for all the sponsorships, the international "partners," the undoubted fact that United is a globally prestigious "brand" – the largest portion of money was made from matches at Old Trafford, off Chester Road in south Manchester.

Income from tickets, including corporate boxes and all the matchday moneymaking, was £101.5m, while TV and media rights made £91m, and the commercial operation a still formidable £64m. In fact, just £3.4m – or 1.3 per cent of United's turnover – was earned from overseas. Football companies, even the world's most famous and richest, are still clubs at heart, rooted in traditional homes, dependent on their loyal supporters.

Dynasty...Avram Glazer

The Glazers, who have been there four years now, borrowed £525m originally to take over the club, then loaded that debt onto United. The accounts showed that those borrowings had burgeoned a further £13m from 2007, courtesy of the 14.25 per cent interest on £138m the Glazers borrowed from hedge funds. The interest on that accumulates, adds to the initial £138m, and by June last year amounted to £40m. Total debts, in bank borrowings alone, were a horrible £700m.

> "Manchester United are almost two entities: the money-leeching Nevada corporation, and the history-making football institution in Stretford, which goes from strength to strength"

The club's record turnover, and operating profit, were turned to a loss of £45m by the interest payments United had to make on all this debt, £69m in the year. The Glazers have never said what the ultimate outcome of all this will be for the club. Fans' money has to service this hideous, pointless interest, for a takeover nobody wanted, from record years of plenty.

Supporters still flock to watch a glorious team assembled by a manager firmly in the pantheon of the game's greatest ever, but the club cannot even nibble at the capital it owes.

There is a remarkable paradox at United, almost two entities: the money-leeching Nevada corporation, and the history-making football institution in Stretford, which goes from strength to strength. The Glazers, it seems, largely stay out of the way, and that has been the smartest move they have made. ●

HEROES...

LUIS FIGO

The former World Player of the Year announced his retirement aged 36 after winning the Italian league with Internazionale.

Hat-trick hero...Forlan

ISRAELI FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Israel's FA ordered Beitar Jerusalem to play a league game behind closed doors as punishment for anti-Arab chants from fans during a match against Maccabi Petah Tikva.

DIEGO FORLAN

The Atletico Madrid striker scored a hat-trick against Athletic Bilbao to leapfrog Salzburg's Marc Janko at the top of the standings for the ESM Golden Shoe.

On the up...Hodgson

ROY HODGSON

After overseeing Fulham's last-gasp survival from relegation a year, he steered the club to seventh place, their highest-ever league position.

SINAN BOLAT

The Standard Liege keeper saved an injury-time penalty on the final day of the season to take the Belgian League to a play-off, which his side then won.

GERARD MEIJER

Feyenoord's masseur retired after 50 years with the club. "I worked with young lads everyday and listened to their music – that keeps you young," said the 73-year-old.

& VILLAINS

Deserved better...Maldini

JULIAN REYES

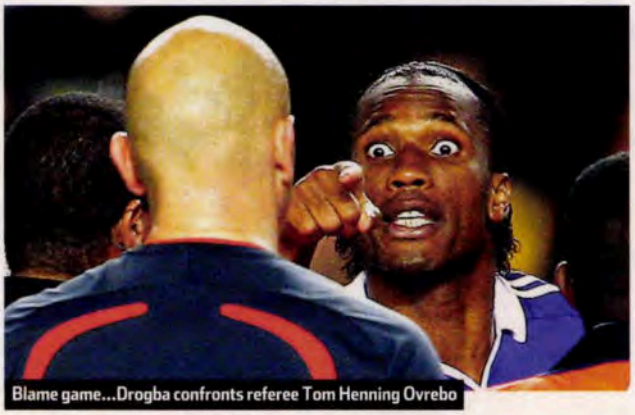
The head of sport at Spain's state TV network was fired after the channel censored boos and hissing that greeted the national anthem at the Cup Final between Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao.

MILAN'S ULTRAS

After Paolo Maldini played his last home game for Milan, a banner was unfurled in San Siro's Curva Sud which read: "Thank you, Skipper. On the pitch you were an infinite champion, but you failed to show respect towards those who made you rich." The Ultras were reportedly angered that Maldini had toed the club line on too many occasions.

DIDIER DROGBA

The Chelsea striker faces a lengthy ban from European competition following his angry reaction to Chelsea's Champions League semi-final defeat by Barcelona.


Blame game...Drogba confronts referee Tom Henning Ovrebo

July 2009 Vol 49 No 10

EDITOR Gavin Hamilton
ART EDITOR Gary Payne
ASSISTANT EDITOR Nich Hills
PICTURE EDITOR Duncan Bond
NEWS EDITOR Jamie Rainbow
EDITORIAL SECRETARY June Hiscock
PICTURES Pictures copyright: Empics, Getty Images, Action Images and Reuters

Thanks this issue to Mike Hughes, Peter Neish, David Rallis

EDITORIAL
Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU
Tel: +44 (0) 20 314 84817
Fax: +44 (0) 20 314 88130
E-mail: world_soccer@ipcmedia.com

ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP Dave Stone, Simon Gerard, Simon Ellis
PRODUCTION MANAGER Tom Jennings
PRODUCTION CONTROLLER Yee Lei Sheng

MANAGING DIRECTOR Paul Williams
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Hamish Dawson
PUBLISHER Adrian Booker

Display ads +44 (0) 20 314 82510
Classified ads +44 (0) 20 314 82576
Sponsorship +44 (0) 20 314 82516
Back issues +44 (0) 20 314 84816
Binders +44 (0) 20 314 84816

International licensing enquiries
+44 (0) 20 314 85490
E-mail: Siriliya_Nawalkar@ipcmedia.com

IPC|INSPIRE

SUBSCRIPTIONS ORDER HOTLINE
+44 (0)845 676 7778
E-mail: ipcsubs@qss-uk.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES
Annual subscription is for 12 months (13 issues, prices include postage) UK: £48.10
Europe/Eire (inc. VAT): 78.95euros (airmail)
USA: $99.45 (airmail)
Rest of world: £83.15 (airmail)

Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ Postmaster: send address changes to *World Soccer*, c/o MAIL America, 365 Blair Road, Avenel NJ 07001, USA. USPS004075

SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
Rockwood House, 9-17 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3DH, England
Tel: +44 (0) 1444 475 675

WorldSoccer is a member of ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

- A Bola (Portugal)
- Don Balon (Spain)
- Fanatik (Turkey)
- Kicker (Germany)
- Sport-Express (Russia)
- Sport/Foot (Belgium)
- TIPS Bladet (Denmark)
- World Soccer (UK)

13 STORIES YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

MEXICO
Swine flu
The outbreak of swine flu ended up with Mexican clubs pulling out of the Libertadores Cup. More, page 42

SCOTLAND
Old Firm go to the wire
Rangers won the Premier League title on the last day of the season. More, page 89

ENGLAND
United on top
Manchester United confirmed their domestic dominance when they retained the Premier League title. More, page 36

SPAIN
Record breakers
Barcelona scored six times against Real Madrid at the Bernabeu for the first time while on their way to the Spanish double. More, page 30

BRAZIL
Serious business
Brazilian teams have dominated this season's Libertadores Cup, while Argentina's clubs have struggled. More, pages 48 and 96

SOUTH AFRICA
Dress rehearsal
World Cup 2010 organisers have a chance to show the world they are ready for next year's finals when the Confederations Cup kicks off on June 14. More, page 56

BELGIUM
Standard's title
The defending champions retained their league crown – but only after winning a play-off against Anderlecht. More, page 86

TURKEY
Shakhtar's glory
Ukraine won their first UEFA Cup in the competition's last Final. More, page 28

UKRAINE
UEFA's ultimatum
Euro 2012 could be taken away from Ukraine after UEFA were left unimpressed with the pace of the preparations for the next European Championship. More, page 37

ITALY
Barcelona triumph in Rome
Breathtaking Barcelona brushed aside Manchester United to win the 2009 Champions League Final. More, page 22

MALAYSIA
Divide and rule
AFC president Mohamed Bin Hammam survived an acrimonious challenge to his leadership. More, page 40

GERMANY
Northern lights
Wolfsburg held their nerve to win their first Bundesliga title. More, page 34

ITALY
Mourinho's mission
Internazionale claimed another Italian title but European success remains their ultimate goal. More, page 50

HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

Andres Iniesta

Barcelona's modest midfielder takes on the world's best

SPAIN

THE FINEST player in the world, for most people, would be Leo Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo, though other candidates would be lined up depending on club or national-team loyalty. Wayne Rooney, however, has his own idea: Andres Iniesta Lujan.

Manchester United's England striker laid that accolade on the Barcelona midfielder immediately after the world and Premier League champions had seen their European crown snatched away in Rome.

Iniesta is certainly a man of the moment. He played a key role in Spain's Euro 2008 triumph, has made Spanish football history this season with Barca's treble-winners, scored that dramatic late, late equaliser against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge which edged his side into the Champions League Final...and then provided an electrifying display (despite being handicapped by injury) in the Olympic Stadium which included setting up the opening goal for Samuel Eto'o after just nine minutes.

It was a strike from which United never recovered.

Iniesta, born in Albacete on May 11, 1984, may have come to international fame a little late, but for followers of Spanish football his qualities have been evident for a decade.

A European champion at Under-16 and Under-19 level, he was a World Youth Cup runner-up in 2003 before becoming captain of Spain Under-21s. Juan Santisteban, the country's legendary youth coach who twice won the European Cup at wing-half with Real Madrid, never harboured any doubts about Iniesta.

"He came from a working-class background and he brought those values to his football from a very early age," says Santisteban. "That is why he went straight through the Barcelona youth academy so quickly; that is why he progressed through the national team so quickly. A player who works so hard is worth his weight."

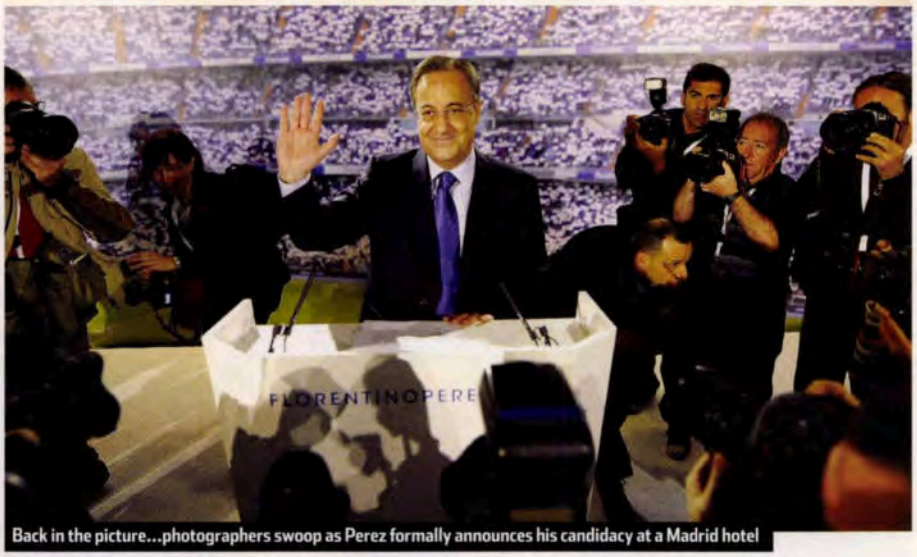
Iniesta learned his football with Albacete – starting at the age of eight – and was later picked out at a tournament for 12-year-olds by Barcelona. At 16 he was training with the seniors, promotion to the Barcelona B nursery set-up followed, and he made his senior debut in 2002-03 under Louis Van Gaal.

He made his mark as a supersub in the 2006 Champions League triumph over Arsenal in Paris, joining the game with Frank Rijkaard's Barcelona 1-0 down but ending up with a winner's medal. Now able to wear his favoured No 8 shirt again after the departure of Ludovic Giuly, Iniesta is again a European champion at both club and national level.

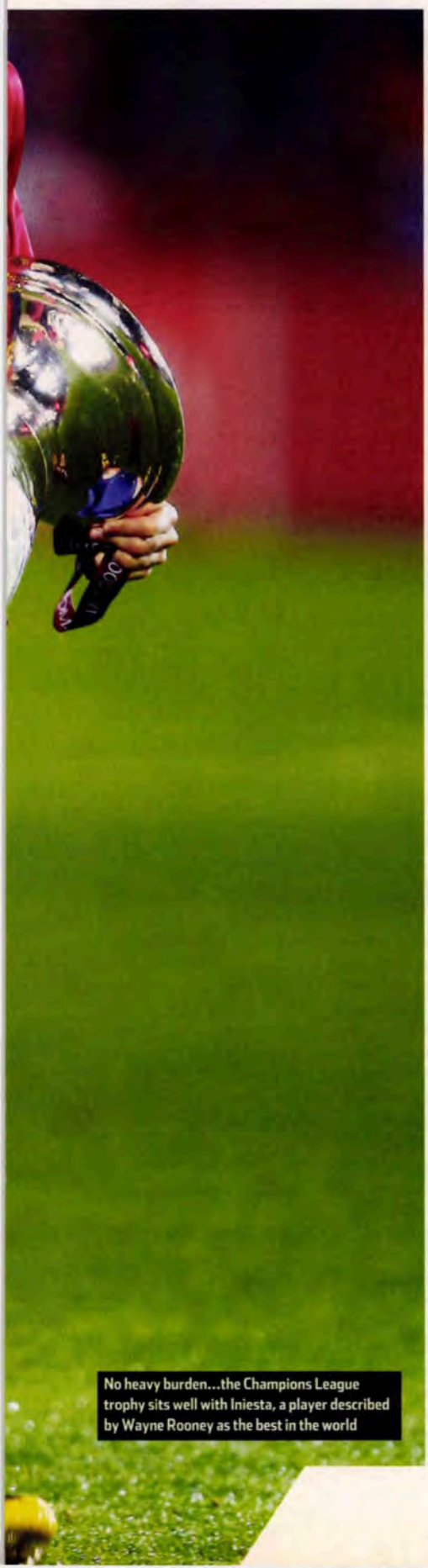
Until Rome his major claim to international fame had been as the only player to start all Spain's games at Euro 2008 and his inclusion in UEFA's squad of the tournament.

But nothing stands still in football. Suddenly Iniesta's reputation has progressed to another level. Best in the world? Certainly one of them.

Keir Radnedge



Back in the picture...photographers swoop as Perez formally announces his candidacy at a Madrid hotel


No heavy burden...the Champions League trophy sits well with Iniesta, a player described by Wayne Rooney as the best in the world

Florentino Perez
The return of Real Madrid's *galactico* president

SPAIN

FLORENTINO PEREZ is back. The former president of Real Madrid will be the next president of Real Madrid – and without a single vote being cast. On June 1 – three years, three coaches, five presidents, more than £260million-worth of players and countless scandals later – Perez was due to walk back into the club on which he walked out. It is the second coming for the man Emilio Butragueno once cringingly described as a "superior being".

The architect of the original *galacticos* policy looks set to construct another ludicrously glamorous team. And fast. He claimed that he would have to "do in one year what you'd normally do in three". That means not one star-signing but three of them. The talk is of an outlay in excess of £260m.

Jorge Valdano and Zinedine Zidane will form part of his staff, but who will coach the team and play in it is another matter entirely. Arsene Wenger was first choice but has insisted he is staying at Arsenal. Jose Mourinho claimed to have had an offer – denied by Perez – but signed an extension at Internazionale. Carlo Ancelotti appeared an option until polls showed he was unpopular with fans and he expressed his desire to join Chelsea. As for players, the shopping list is a schoolboy's dream: Ronaldo, Ribery, Kaka, Villa, Silva, Alonso, etc...

It's not just about names, though. The raging institutional instability that has beset Madrid over the last few years has also seen Perez being portrayed as the club's saviour – even though he departed as it closed in on the longest trophyless spell in half a century and his successor, Ramon Calderon, immediately won back-to-back league titles. But Calderon stands accused of rigging the members' assembly, while Perez is a cleverer, more serious presidential figure.

When he announced his candidacy at a huge unveiling at the Ritz Hotel in Madrid, he admitted having made only one mistake: leaving. There was no remorse for anything else.

As Calderon's regime plunged from crisis to crisis, Perez became even more determined to return. He maintained a public silence but the announcement he would stand surprised no one.

In fact, he will not need to stand at all. Juan Onieva, Eugenio Martinez Bravo and Eduardo Garcia had all announced they would run. Initially, there were hopes that a former players' collective led by Manolo Sanchis would too. In the end, the £50m deposit that candidates must put up, allied to the open support of Perez by a media that had already chosen its winner, saw them pull out one by one.

After months of trying to raise the funds or persuade a bank to support him, Martinez Bravo admitted he could not get the money. Garcia made a legal challenge, demanding the club withdraw the obligation for candidates to stump up the guarantee. Onieva claimed he had the money, announced his candidacy – complete with a surreal slideshow presentation that accidentally included a doctored photo of JFK with six fingers – was pilloried by the press, and pulled out, no explanation given. Perez, one of Europe's 10 richest men, just put the cash on the table and was left as the only candidate.

And so Perez is president again. It is democracy, but not as we know it. Then again, no one seems that concerned. And if Madrid build a brilliant team that can challenge Barcelona they won't care one little bit.

Sid Lowe

You're the man...Blazevic is hugged by striker Edin Dzeko after masterminding a 2-1 win over Belgium in a World Cup qualifier

Miroslav Blazevic
Croatian coach enjoying comeback success

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

HE'S AT it again. Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic has steered Bosnia-Herzegovina to an enviable position in the 2010 World Cup qualifying campaign and, suddenly, South Africa seems within reach.

In the last round of qualifiers, Bosnia beat Belgium home and away to establish themselves in second place in their group, behind Spain and with clear blue water between themselves and the other contenders, Belgium and Turkey.

Bosnia have come reasonably close before, notably when missing out on the Euro 2004 play-offs by a single point. But this time they are led by "Ciro" Blazevic, the man behind Croatia's third place at the 1998 World Cup.

However, it has not been plain sailing for Blazevic. His appointment in July 2008 was greeted with scepticism by senior players such as Faruk Hadzibegic, Mehmed Bazdarevic and Vahid Halilhodzic, who were angry at the sacking of Meho Kodro. The fans, meanwhile, were all too aware of Blazevic's outspoken Croatian nationalism, his friendship with Croatia's late president Franjo Tudjman and his past support for the separation of Bosnia-Herzegovina following the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Yet Blazevic has charmed his way into Bosnia's affections, hailing the form of the national team as a "miracle" and describing himself as "Croatian by nationality, but Bosnian in soul".

Blazevic has also been quick to praise his players, notably Edin Dzeko.

"Alen Boksic was a miraculous player, but Dzeko is stronger," Blazevic says of the Wolfsburg striker who scored in both games against Belgium. "Dzeko is better than [Zlatan] Ibrahimovic."

The results have helped too. A 7-0 victory over Estonia in the opening qualifier set the tone for the campaign, and even defeats by Spain and Turkey have not dimmed optimism.

Blazevic enjoys support from the leaders of all three of the country's entities – Bosnians, Serbs and Croats – and has earned praise from Valentin Inzko, the European Union's special representative, for his ability to unite the country.

The veteran's talents are well known. He first enjoyed success with Dinamo Zagreb, winning the Yugoslav League in 1982, and his greatest success was Croatia's bronze medal at France 98. A decade later, following spells with Iran's national team and several Croatian club sides, he has re-emerged with Bosnia. No longer yesterday's man, Blazevic is back in the spotlight. However, not all of the attention has focused on Blazevic's coaching...

Newspapers in Sarajevo have delighted in reports that he has been "hanging out" with local doctor and old flame Ljubica Buba Todorovic. Some have even speculated that their possible "relationship" was an additional factor in motivating him to success with Bosnia. Blazevic has denied cheating on his wife, who has lived in Geneva for the past 30 years.

He also remains hugely secretive over his age. His official birthdate is February 10, 1935, but he carries with him a travel document that lists his year of birth as 1937.

Confidence has never been a problem for Blazevic. He even stood in Croatia's presidential election after the death of his friend Tudjman, but received only 0.8 per cent of the vote. In Bosnia, his approval rating is a great deal higher.

Zdravko Reic

Farewell drink...Magath toasts Wolfsburg's title
Off to the Gulf...Gerets
New man at Marseille...Deschamps
Bayern bound...Van Gaal
Ajax exit...Van Basten
Big decision...Ancelotti has been linked with Chelsea

Felix Magath, Eric Gerets, Louis Van Gaal & others
The managerial merry-go-round starts early

EUROPE

EVEN BEFORE the European season had finished, some of the continent's biggest coaching names had stated their intention of moving on.

At Germany's soon-to-be champions Wolfsburg, the announcement that Felix Magath would be leaving to join Schalke threatened to derail their challenge for a first Bundesliga title.

Magath had already agreed that his two-year "project" had run its course but he had hoped to keep the story under wraps until the season had finished. However, he made the announcement in early May, with three league games still to play in a tight title race, when it became clear that his move was about to become public.

"I am glad that the decision is finally out, even if I am not really happy about the circumstances," said Magath. "After discussions with Wolfsburg's supervisory board, we had already decided I would leave, but I regret the timing."

Wolfsburg have turned to Armin Veh, the man behind Stuttgart's 2007's title triumph, as Magath's replacement.

At another title-chasing club, Marseille, the coach also announced his departure before the end of the campaign. With four league games still remaining, Eric Gerets complained about a "lack of trust" with owner Robert Louis-Dreyfus and admitted that his decision to join Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia was partially motivated by money as he will earn considerably more than he did in France.

"I made this decision a while ago," Gerets said, adding that he had wanted to wait until the end of the season to make an announcement but was bounced into a public statement by newspaper reports of his Saudi salary. "This article came out and I had to react. The players and I will now be able to concentrate 100 per cent on what's important: to try to be champions of France at the end of the season."

Marseille reacted quickly to the news of Gerets' departure by announcing Didier Deschamps as coach for next season. Deschamps, Marseille's captain when they won the 1993 European Cup, has not worked as a coach since leaving Juventus in 2007.

In Holland, Louis Van Gaal, having steered outsiders AZ to the Dutch title, waited for his side to be confirmed as champions before agreeing a move to Bayern Munich, where temporary coach Jupp Heynckes had taken the post vacated by Jurgen Klinsmann to ensure the club did not miss out on Champions League qualification.

Van Gaal had been under contract to AZ until 2010 but the new Dutch champions agreed to his early departure after Bayern offered to play a friendly match in Holland next summer.

Van Gaal's place at AZ will be taken by Ronald Koeman, who had been a contender to return to his former club Ajax after Marco Van Basten quit following a humiliating 4-0 defeat at Sparta Rotterdam in which they lost second spot in the league and a place in the Champions League qualifying round to Twente.

The new man at Ajax is Martin Jol, who led Hamburg to fifth place in the Bundesliga – guaranteeing them a Europa League spot – and the UEFA Cup semi-finals. Van Basten, in turn, has been linked with his former club Milan, where Carlo Ancelotti was widely tipped to leave to take charge at Chelsea. The merry-go-round is set to continue for some weeks to come.

Gavin Hamilton

Keir Radnedge

Platini's trump card

UEFA votes hold the key to success for England's World Cup bid

ANDY ANSON, chief executive for England's 2018 World Cup bid, says he is optimistic that the necessary lessons have been learned from the unsuccessful attempt to host 2006.

In that case the most important one – and possibly the most delicate one, too – will be persuading Michel Platini, president of UEFA, to bring on board the European federation and the region's seven votes in FIFA's decision-making executive in December 2010.

Platini has been highly critical of the Premier League's financial model and the clubs' reliance on foreign, rather than home-grown, players. The controversial proposal for a 39th game to be staged around the world was further fuel on the fire of irritation and mistrust.

On the other hand, Platini is a great admirer of the traditions of the English game. This is the reason the winners of UEFA's club competitions now collect the trophies from up in the VIP box, Wembley-style, rather than on a hastily assembled presentation platform out on the pitch.

Platini is hoping, behind the scenes, to persuade FIFA that the 2018 finals should return to Europe and that the other hosting contenders from around the world should fight it out for 2022. Then UEFA, as in the 2006 race won by Germany, will make up its own mind ahead of the FIFA executive decision in December 2010.

That time around, under the presidency of Sweden's Lennart Johansson, UEFA came down solidly for the Germans. England cannot afford a repeat. Thus it may have been a first sign of political sensitivity recently when it was revealed that the Premier League is considering introduced a UEFA-style system of home-grown player quotas and some tighter financial regulation.

Initial whispers from UEFA headquarters at Nyon, near Geneva, were encouraging. Not that Platini himself leapt forward, but a gentle pat on the head for the FA came from his special counsellor William Gaillard.

Campaign trail...Beckham, Anson, Brown, Triesman and Rooney enlist local children to help launch England's 2018 bid at Wembley

Different campaign

Anson says: "We cannot be arrogant or complacent. One of the things we learned from the last World Cup bid was we were perceived to be arrogant in how we presented ourselves. The tone of this campaign has to be different. We will certainly not be saying football is coming home. It was an arrogant slogan."

A bid launch party was held at Wembley and attended by heroes of today and yesterday – David Beckham and Wayne Rooney, along with Sir Bobby Charlton and Sir Geoff Hurst – plus prime minister Gordon Brown.

FA chairman Lord Triesman, who is also the bid chairman, says: "We have first-class grounds and good transport links, domestically and internationally. We've got excellent accommodation. A World Cup in England would be a truly memorable event – not only for our nation but for every nation." ●

"We won't be saying football is coming home. That was an arrogant slogan"

● Fifteen cities have been short-listed as prospective venues: Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and Sunderland in the north; Birmingham, Derby, Leicester and Nottingham in the Midlands; and Bristol, London, Milton Keynes and Portsmouth in the south.

● The other hosting contenders are: Belgium/Holland, Portugal/Spain, Russia, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Qatar (2022 only), South Korea (2022 only), Mexico and United States.

Read more from Keir Radnedge at worldsoccer.com

Grounds for concern...the Teslim Balogun Stadium in Lagos is one of only two Nigerian venues currently deemed fit to stage the world Under-17 tournament

Nigerian woes highlight African football's dilemma

HISTORY will be made in South Africa next year when the World Cup finals are hosted in Africa for the first time.

But not everything is rosy in the African football garden. The continent's hosting later this year of FIFA's two world youth cups – the Under-17s in Nigeria and the Under-20s in Egypt – is coming under increasing scrutiny.

Egypt is expected, ultimately, to carry through the Under-20 tournament as the federation and local government authorities know all about hosting, not least from the African Nations Cup. But while there are some concerns about infrastructure, they are nothing compared to those in Nigeria, which has been warned it risks losing the Under-17 event because preparations are in a poor state.

There is a significant power game going on behind the scenes. Africa was a "favoured child" in the process which led to the 2010 World Cup being awarded to South Africa. But now Africa is being expected to deliver and the time for sweet talking is over.

Jack Warner, Trinidadian president of the Central and North American federation, was in Nigeria recently on an inspection visit. His assessment was that only two of the nine nominated venues – Abuja and Lagos – appear on course to be ready for the finals which start on October 24.

Nigeria has been given one month to demonstrate significant progress or lose the event – and not for the first time.

Warner says: "If each and every one of the venues do not reach the 100 per cent readiness level we expect, FIFA will withdraw the tournament hosting rights from Nigeria and go somewhere else. As of this moment, Nigeria is not ready to host the tournament."

WADA stand-off continues

THE NONSENSICAL delicacy of the diplomatic game being played out over anti-doping rules and regulations was underlined when FIFA and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) revealed that their two presidents had been talking to each other. There's progress for you.

Not that FIFA's Sepp Blatter and WADA's John Fahey met face-to-face, you understand, they only picked up the phone.

That, in itself however, was a step in the right direction after Blatter's public utterances on the vexed question of "whereabouts" and Fahey's dismissive retort that he was not prepared to "negotiate via the media".

WADA wants FIFA to swallow the same medicine as every other sport, while FIFA balks at allowing an outside body to dictate its modus operandi.

FIFA is proud of its own anti-doping programme and opposes the "whereabouts" demand in the revised WADA Code that was introduced in January. This stipulates nominated players must inform national anti-doping organisations of their location at all times.

Football insists this is both intrusive and unnecessary for players who live most of their professional lives within a team/group context.

WADA disagrees. Director general David Howman says: "The screenings we go through at airports every time we fly are intrusive but no one objects because it's all for the greater good. I'd like to think the same thing applies here."

Buckle up. It could be bumpy flight.

England dreams...Almunia

Almunia still living in hope

TERRY BUTCHER, John Barnes and Owen Hargreaves (born in Singapore, Jamaica and Canada respectively) are all noted England players who were not born in the country – which is encouraging Arsenal's Manuel Almunia to dream of playing one day for the country he can adopt after July 14. That is when Almunia – born in Pamplona, Spain – would be able to apply for British residency status. This would make him eligible, according to FIFA's rules, to represent the country in which he has played his football for the past five years.

Every succeeding mistake by David James extends the debate over Almunia's England potential.

Aston Villa's Scott Carson has not made the progress expected and Manchester United's League Cup-winning hero Ben Foster has been denied Premier League action by the consistency of the revived Edwin Van der Sar.

England manager Fabio Capello has not expressed a view either way. Clearly he wants the best players available but – after Rangers' Spanish-born striker Nacho Novo had an offer to play for Scotland rebuffed – it has emerged an informal agreement exists among the British home countries to consider only players with family antecedents.

ROME

Keir Radnedge in Rome salutes a remarkable achievement by Pep Guardiola's Barcelona

Masters of

BARCELONA'S MOTTO describes them as "more than a club". They were certainly more of a team than outgoing holders Manchester United in Rome's Olympic Stadium, where the eternal city provided an indisputably finite outcome to the 2008-09 Champions League campaign.

The showdown between the two most entertaining and positive teams in Europe had been happily hyped but reality fell below the dream; that was largely down to United who, once they went behind, never looked capable of making a match of it.

Barcelona claimed a surprisingly decisive victory over a disjointed United and, in so doing, secured a third European crown – after 1992 and 2006 – and left the world and English champions thoroughly outplayed.

The Catalans thus became the first Spanish club ever to achieve a title treble and United proved unable to break the jinx which denies the Champions League winners a successful title defence.

In effect the game was nine minutes of United and then 81

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

May 27, 2009 - Rome
Barcelona 2 (Eto'o 9, Messi 70)
Manchester United 0
HT: 1-0. Att: 67,000.
Ref: Busacca (Swi)

Barcelona: Valdes - Puyol, Yaya Toure, Pique, Sylvinho - Xavi, Busquets, Iniesta (Pedro Rodriguez 89) - Eto'o, Messi, Henry (Keita 70).
Coach: Guardiola.
Unused subs: Pinto, Martin Caceres, Gudjohnsen, Bojan Krkic, Marc Muniesa.
United: Van der Sar - O'Shea, Ferdinand, Vidic, Evra - Park (Berbatov 66), Anderson (Tevez 46), Carrick, Giggs (Scholes 74), Rooney - Ronaldo.
Coach: Ferguson.
Unused subs: Kuszczak, Nani, Rafael Da Silva, Evans.

the universe

Simply the best...Barcelona reign in Rome

Handful...not for the first time, United struggle to get to grips with Messi

minutes of Barcelona. Indeed, the two-goal margin flattered United, who appeared more likely to concede a third goal in the closing stages than score the one which would bring them back into the game.

Thus the Premier League's apparent second season of Champions League domination, with three clubs in the semi-finals, ended with nothing to boast about. Barcelona, beating Chelsea in the semis and then United in the Final, cannot be challenged as worthy winners.

Legend...Barca captain Puyol lifts the Champions League for a second time

Whether they can retain the crown is something else entirely though. It is perfectly reasonable to consider that had United played as they can they would have caused serious damage in the Catalans' threadbare defence. Carles Puyol struggles now with the pace of a game at centre-back, never mind right-back, Rafael Marquez was injured and Dani Alves suspended.

All credit must go to Yaya Toure for an outstanding performance in defensive emergency, and to the step-up in class accomplished by Gerard Pique. But, with Cristiano Ronaldo trying to beat Barca on his own, and Wayne Rooney marginalised on the left wing, United's weaponry was ultimately ineffective.

Over-optimistic

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson explained later that Ryan Giggs was preferred in midfield in the hope that he could break forward and link with Ronaldo, but the hope that they could give those remarkable "twins" Xavi Hernandez and Andres Iniesta the slip was surely over-optimistic. Park Ji-sung lacked any spark of inspiration out on the right, while the energy of Carlos Tevez and the class of Dimitar Berbatov were deployed when the cause was on the way to being lost.

United have a wonderful history of comebacks but, even in the talismanic 100th-birthday anniversary week for Sir Matt Busby, it was too much to hope for a Barcelona/Bayern/1999-style miracle.

They may claim it could have been so different if they had taken the lead in the second minute when keeper Victor Valdes failed to hold a powerful Ronaldo free-kick and Barcelona were fortunate to clear for a corner.

The Portugal striker, playing centre-forward, frightened Valdes twice more inside the first nine minutes with shots which flew narrowly wide. But Barcelona took over once they had scored, with United caught out by the Catalans' tactic of using Eto'o wide on the right with Messi pulled into a central striking role.

Outstanding midfielder Andres Iniesta was allowed to burst through the centre and he found Eto'o, who cut in from the right, turned Vidic and rammed home an angled, close-range shot beyond Edwin Van der Sar.

Giggs pulled a free-kick over the

Touch of class...Platini congratulates Messi

bar and Ronaldo was just wide with a low drive, but Barcelona had found their feet and were not to be knocked over. Messi ran at United and shot over the bar, then Xavi produced an free-kick which skimmed just wide.

The ultimate player

The game had been expected not to be "just" about club primacy in Europe, if not the world: it was also about who was the ultimate player, with Ronaldo in direct comparison with Messi.

By now, however, Messi, for all Ronaldo's fireworks, was having the best of the issue, serving as a link on the coherent inter-passing with which Barcelona were so often bypassing United's midfield.

United sent on Tevez at the start of the second half as substitute for the ineffective Anderson but without effect. Instead United had to thank the reflexes of Van der Sar from keeping them in touch, the Dutchman diving brilliantly to his left to keep out a curling free-kick from Xavi.

United upped the desperation stakes by bringing on Berbatov for Park, but Barcelona answered arrogantly by running down to the other end so Messi could head

A winner at last... Thierry Henry thanks Messi

The Premier League's apparent domination ended with nothing

WHAT THEY SAID

PEP GUARDIOLA

"Perhaps I'll quit now. I can't win anything else. I'm very happy, very excited for the team. We're aware we've done something magnificent."

"This is the best season in the history of Barcelona. We are fortunate to have the legacy of the work of Johan Cruyff and Charly Rexach, and now we have to be worthy of it. We have worked hard for many, many hours and now many people are wonderfully happy. That is our reward."

"At the beginning of the game we didn't expect Ronaldo to pressure us so high up the pitch. They had a very big chance in the opening minutes but then we scored – much earlier than I expected – and after that we moved Messi back towards midfield, tried to be superior in keeping possession, and it worked out well for us. Without the ball we are a disastrous team, a horrible team, so we need the ball."

"The easiest way to win is to play well. There is no other way. If you play well you take control of the ball, attack and then you create more chances of winning. Nothing is more dangerous than not winning."

"We had looked at the video of last season's semi-final and I saw Messi had problems then which is why I decided to link him up through the centre of attack with Andres Iniesta to give us an extra man in midfield. If Iniesta had been 100 per cent he would have had an enormous game. We just told him not to shoot so as to take no risks."

"I have dedicated our victory to Paolo Maldini. He is, for me, the best European player of the last 20 years."

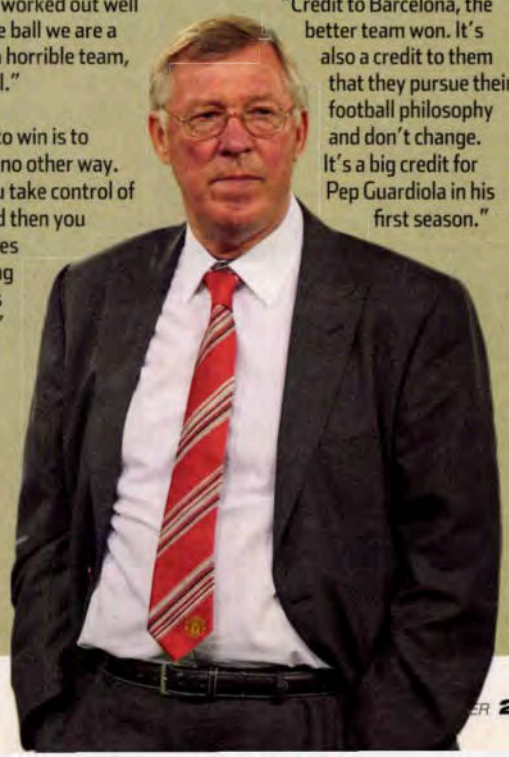
SIR ALEX FERGUSON

"The first goal gave them the opportunity to keep possession which they do very well. We didn't deal with it well enough. That was the story of the game, really. There were disappointing performances which some individuals will know themselves. If you look at our best performances they have been when we have defended well. But this time our defending was shoddy, particularly on that first goal."

"The way they kept possession, and with Messi dropping back into midfield, made it difficult for us to get the better of them. When we did get the ball we didn't do well enough with it. Normally we are better than that."

"We had recognised the strengths of Barcelona with their midfield players, which is why we tried to use Ryan Giggs to play up towards the front man or drop back into midfield. We expected better of ourselves."

"Credit to Barcelona, the better team won. It's also a credit to them that they pursue their football philosophy and don't change. It's a big credit for Pep Guardiola in his first season."



WHAT THEY SAID

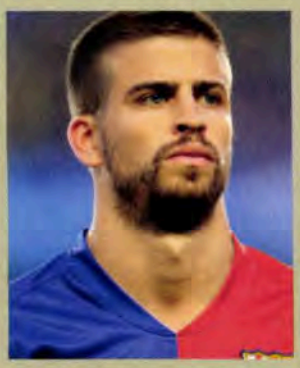
THIERRY HENRY

"I had such an ambition to win this. It's because people remember winners, that's the difference. You can play good football, pass the ball well, but unless you win silverware somehow it doesn't count and we never did it in Europe while I was at Arsenal."

"I struggle to describe what we have achieved this year. No team has ever done this treble in Spain. It is something amazing. Apart from the way we play it is also down to the way we fought all season."

"I will always have the disappointment from 2006 with Arsenal because they are in my heart and in my blood, but tonight I am happy."

GERARD PIQUE



"This was very special because we played really well, we deserved to win and Barcelona was always my club since I was a boy. It's been a dream season. But from my time at United I have very good friends and to see them lose the game was not good."

CRISTIANO RONALDO

"This has been one of the biggest disappointments of my career. We were always confident before the game

but unfortunately we couldn't do it. We didn't play well. We did OK in the first 10 minutes but Barcelona deserved to win."

WAYNE ROONEY

"It is a big disappointment but Barcelona were the better team. They not only scored two good goals but, unfortunately for us, they came at good times."

"Barcelona are a brilliant team. Andres Iniesta is the best player in the world in my opinion. If you don't take your chances against them, they will punish you."

"We just have to forget it and look forward to next season."

home Xavi's curling right-wing cross. Incredibly, in the heart of United's defence, the Argentina striker was totally unmarked.

UEFA president Michel Platini ruffled Messi's mop of hair as he presented the striker with his winner's medal. Platini had been a European champion in his time but only in tarnished, painful circumstances in 1985. Now he presides over a very different Europe to the one in which he scored his goals.

It's far bigger, with far more nations and generates far more money. A study on the eve of the Final suggested that both clubs could expect a windfall of more than £110million each in a match that was worth upwards of £310m in total to the European economy.

So Platini's suspicion of the commercial success of the Premier League must be a little tongue-in-cheek. UEFA, despite the recession, is looking at increasing its TV and sponsorship revenues and, frankly, probably has more money than it knows what to do with.

One certain factor is that the internationalising of the European game will continue. As Barcelona and Manchester United kicked off in Rome, so Chelsea were pondering whether an Italian (Carlo Ancelotti) was the best possible replacement for a Dutchman (Guus Hiddink) in England, while Milan were considering bringing in a Brazilian (Leonardo) and neighbours Internazionale were offering a Portuguese (Jose Mourinho) a massive extended new contract to keep him out of acquisitive Spanish hands (Real Madrid).

The best team

Amid all this jet-set financial fun and games, Barcelona's victory was a rewarding one for those who still believe in the ultimate purity of football. The best team won – and they were the best team because they played the finest, most attractive yet effective football.

Second best...Alex Ferguson's side were left standing by Barcelona

Barca's victory was a rewarding one for those who believe in the purity of football

Unfortunately it may not last as Barcelona are renowned as a club with a tradition for impatience, political manoeuvring and transfer misjudgments to compare with any other major club across the world.

But, for now, salute what the remarkable Pep Guardiola has achieved. There can never be another season like it...for him or his club. ●

Guardiola, the history man

BEFORE the Final, Pep Guardiola had told his players to be bold in their approach. "I want the players to feel beautiful, to feel they're playing in front of the entire world," he said. "I want them to be daring and feel that we're here so we should perform as we can. That will be our attitude."

His mentor, Johan Cruyff, would surely have approved. In the 1990s, Guardiola was the midfield lynchpin of Cruyff's "Dream Team" when Barcelona won four successive Spanish league titles and the club's first European Cup, against Sampdoria at Wembley in 1992.

Now, 17 years later, in his rookie season as coach, he deserves all the plaudits for his work with a team that threatens to eclipse the achievements of the Dream Team.

Guardiola has already made history. After his side's breathtaking victory over Manchester United in Rome, he joins a select group who have won the European Cup as a player and coach.

Guardiola's achievement is all the more remarkable because he was toiling away anonymously as the coach of Barcelona's B team before becoming the first man to win the European Cup in his first full season as a first-team coach. (Miguel Munoz took charge of Real Madrid shortly before their 1960 Final victory against Eintracht.)

However, he is not the youngest coach to win a Final. Munoz was 38 years and 119 days old when he won in 1960 – 10 days younger than Guardiola.

EUROPEAN CUP WINNERS AS PLAYERS AND COACH

MIGUEL MUNOZ
(Real Madrid 1956, 1957 and Real Madrid 1960, 1966)
GIOVANNI TRAPATTONI
(Milan 1963, 1969 and Juventus 1985)
JOHAN CRUYFF
(Ajax 1971, 1972, 1973 and Barcelona 1992)
CARLO ANCELOTTI
(Milan 1989, 1990 and Milan 2003, 2007)
FRANK RIJKAARD
(Milan 1989, 1990, Ajax 1995 and Barcelona 2006)
PEP GUARDIOLA
(Barcelona 1992 and Barcelona 2009)

KEY MOMENTS

2 MINS
Cristiano Ronaldo's free-kick swerves in front of Valdes, who spills the ball, but Pique clears before Park can reach it

10 MINS
GOAL! In Barca's first attack of the game, Samuel Eto'o cuts inside Vidic and pokes the ball inside Van der Sar's near post

48 MINS
A brilliant run from Henry takes him into the United area, but Van der Sar saves

53 MINS
United escape when Xavi's free-kick hits a post

55 MINS
Rooney's cross evades Ronaldo and bounces over Park

70 MINS
GOAL! United fail to clear properly and Xavi floats a perfect cross on to the head of the unmarked Lionel Messi

72 MINS
Valdes blocks Ronaldo's shot from six yards out

78 MINS
United substitute Scholes is booked for a reckless two-footed tackle on Busquets

84 MINS
Puyol, played into area, tries to chip Van der Sar, who blocks

ISTANBUL

Shakhtar's glory

Gavin Hamilton reports from Istanbul on a triumph for Ukraine in the last-ever UEFA Cup Final

SO FAREWELL, then, UEFA Cup; hello, Europa League. On an evening of firsts and lasts in Istanbul, Shakhtar Donetsk broke Ukraine's duck in the final UEFA Cup Final.

The competition now mutates into the Europa League, UEFA's new name for the old competition. The group stage will be expanded – with 12 groups of four replacing eight groups of five – but the same problem remains. Namely, how to match the quality and box-office attractiveness of UEFA's richer cousin: the Champions League.

Not that Shakhtar are complaining. Their victory over a disappointing Werder Bremen side was the third in five years by a club from the former Soviet Union, following CSKA Moscow in 2005 and Zenit St Petersburg in 2008. It also silenced the claims of Dynamo Kyiv, winners of the Cup-winners Cup in 1976 and 1985, to be Ukraine's most successful club.

It's debatable whether Shakhtar's success in the UEFA Cup is a reflection of the growing power of eastern European football or simply the indifference of those clubs from wealthier western leagues. However, Shakhtar and Bremen had to overcome significant obstacles to reach the Final, having both landed in the safety net of the UEFA Cup's last 32 after failing to negotiate the Champions League group stages.

Shakhtar beat Tottenham, CSKA Moscow, Marseille and Dynamo Kyiv, while Bremen got the better of Milan, Saint-Etienne, Udinese and Hamburg.

The likes of Aston Villa and Tottenham may have fielded weaker teams in the group stages, but neither finalist could be accused of not taking the competition seriously. For Bremen, their poor early season form in the Bundesliga meant the UEFA Cup was their best chance of silverware. As Germany coach Joachim Low had told *World Soccer* earlier in the day: "For German football, it's important to have a club in the Final. For a long time we've had no clubs in any Final. Yes, it's the UEFA Cup but it's still important for us."

That's it...skipper Darijo Srna salutes the final whistle

Yet even the fans were cool on the prospect of a European Final. Whereas Liverpool and Milan fans had flooded Istanbul for the 2005 Champions League Final, the 37,357 attendance was well short of the 58,990 capacity of Fenerbahce's Sukru Saracoglu stadium. (The ground's location on the Asian side of Istanbul made this the first European final to be played on another continent.)

> "We want to do something in the Champions League"
>
> *Shakhtar coach Mircea Lecescu sets his sights even higher for next season*

Clash of styles

Mircea Lucescu, Shakhtar's Romanian coach, was back in the city where he had enjoyed Turkish league success with Galatasaray and Besiktas, and before the game he had predicted a clash of footballing styles.

"Bremen are the attacking team with very good physique and a lot of really good athletes on their team," he explained. "As for Shakhtar, our style is based on the good technique of the players."

Lucescu's comments may have been prompted by the fact the German club's Brazilian playmaker Diego, scorer of spectacular goals en route to the Final, was suspended after collecting a yellow card against Hamburg in the semi-final. Bremen were also without injured striker Hugo Almeida and defender Per Mertesacker.

Certainly, without Diego, who was on the verge of

History maker...Jadson (far left) scores the last-ever UEFA Cup goal

joining Juventus, Bremen lacked any creative ideas.

In contrast, Shakhtar could call on a Brazilian quintet – defensive midfielder Fernandinho, attacking midfielders Jadson, Ilsinho and Willian, and striker Luiz Adriano – which was to provide the match with its few memorable moments.

Brazilians' key role

Brazilians have played a key role in Shakhtar's recent success. Lucescu has signed no fewer than 11 in five years as coach and this season they scored 20 of the side's 25 goals in Europe.

Initially, Bremen struggled to contain Shakhtar's intricate passing moves. Willian should have put the Ukrainians ahead in the fourth minute, when played through by Jadson, but he screwed his shot wide.

They made amends midway through the first half when Rat's pass found its way through to Luiz Adriano, who chipped over the advancing Tim Wiese. But just as it looked as if Shakhtar might turn on the style, they let Bremen back into the match when Pyatov spilled Nando's long-range free-kick into the net.

Bremen were grateful to reach half-time on level terms after Wiese tipped away Lewandowski's powerful shot and Prodl blocked a corner on the line.

Few chances followed in the second half as nerves set in. Bremen had looked the more energetic during the break at full-time, standing while Shakhtar's players lay sprawled on the ground, but it was Jadson who made the breakthrough seven minutes into extra-time, turning in Srna's low cross.

Pyatov then made amends for his earlier mistake by denying Pizarro, who also had a last-minute effort ruled out for a push.

"We knew they were very fast and we knew we had to deny them space but it didn't really work out," conceded Bremen coach Thomas Schaaf. "We weren't able to attack as much as we usually are able to do. Our ball control wasn't good enough."

For Lucescu, the result was "a fair reflection of what you saw on the pitch".

He had come close to being sacked after failure to reach the Champions League knockout stage last autumn, but Shakhtar's wealthy benefactor Rinat Akhmetov stuck by him and called on the expensively assembled squad to prove themselves in the UEFA Cup.

Mission accomplished. Now the target for Shakhtar is to pursue further European success. "This first European trophy is fantastic," said Lucescu. "But we want other things. We want to do something in the Champions League like reach the quarter-finals or even the semi-finals.

"Eastern European countries have the chance to win the Champions League and we will try to do it."

The Croatian, Romanian, Polish and Serbian flags draped over Shakhtar players told of a cosmopolitan side that contained only three Ukrainians in the starting line-up. But it was the Brazilian flag that flew highest in Istanbul on a night when Europe bade a muted farewell to the UEFA Cup. ●

Money talks...owner Rinat Akhmetov (centre) celebrates Shakhtar's success

Holding on...coach Lucescu had been close to being sacked

Something to shout about...Luiz Adriano opened the scoring in Istanbul

2009 UEFA CUP FINAL

May 20 - Sukru Saracoglu stadium, Istanbul

Shakhtar Donetsk 2 (Luiz Adriano 25, Jadson 97)
Werder Bremen 1 (Naldo 35) AET
HT: 1-1. 90mins: 1-1. Att: 37,357.
Ref: Medina Cantalejo (Spa)

Shakhtar: Pyatov - Srna, Kucher, Chyhrynskiy, Rat - Lewandowski, Fernandinho, Ilsinho (Gai 100), Jadson (Duljaj 112), Willian - Luiz Adriano (Gladkiy 90).
Bremen: Wiese - Fritz (Pasanen 95), Prodl, Naldo, Boenisch - Niemeyer (Tziolis 113), Frings, Baumann, Ozil - Pizarro, Rosenberg (Hunt 78).

DISPATCHES

INDEX

SPAIN P30
GERMANY P34
ENGLAND P36
UKRAINE P37
IRAQ P38
ASIA P40
AUSTRIA P41
MEXICO P42
GREECE P44
AFRICA P45
USA P46
BRAZIL P48
KOSOVO P49
ITALY P50

SPAIN

SID LOWE in Madrid

THIS YEAR'S league title race effectively came to an end one sunny bank holiday weekend in Madrid at the start of May as Barcelona, champions for the 19th time, wrapped up one of the most brilliant campaigns in their history, in which they have scored more goals than ever before, and left Real Madrid empty-handed in second place.

No real surprise there. But what was a shock was that it took so long, that there was even a title race at all, that Real Madrid versus FCB on May 2, 2009, ended up really mattering. It might have ended in humiliation for Juande Ramos' side, but it is to their enormous credit that the season even stretched to May.

When Barca beat Madrid 2-0 at Camp Nou in December, the *cules* celebrated in classic style with chants of "*campeones, campeones*" ringing out around the stadium. So too did the fans' favourite: "*Madrid, cabron, saluda al campeon!*" (Madrid, you bastards, salute the champions!) In the Barcelona dressing room they were leaping about cheering too, and you could hardly blame them.

Barcelona were 12 points clear at the top of the table and no team had ever overcome a lead that big at Christmas. Meanwhile, Madrid were down in sixth and in crisis. Even little relegation-threatened Getafe, the capital's third club, had scored more goals. Coach Bernd Schuster had been sacked for saying it was impossible to win at Camp Nou, yet he had been proven right. So far behind had Madrid slipped, so inferior were they, that they were congratulating themselves on only losing 2-0.

"Considering the situation, we're satisfied," admitted Raul, pretty much saying it all.

Considering the situation. Considering the crippling injuries, the suspensions and the state of the squad. Considering the institutional crisis, the dreadful form of key players and the falling fitness of others. Considering the fantastic displays produced by Barcelona, the side that had won 12 and drawn one of their last 13 games.

The title race was all but over. When defender Michel Salgado insisted that the celebrations had hurt his pride and that Madrid would fight back, when he claimed that he and his team-mates would take revenge at the Bernabeu, most people thought he was slightly mad. They didn't have a hope in hell.

If Madrid were going to win the league they needed Barcelona to lose four games, even though they had lost just once all season (on the opening day). They needed Barcelona to drop 12 points when they had dropped only seven all season. Even then, Madrid would still have to win every single match. And there was no way that was going to happen. Was there?

Actually, there very nearly was. Incredibly, under new coach Ramos, Real Madrid won 17 out of 18 matches following that Camp Nou defeat. It hadn't always been wonderfully entertaining but Madrid did go half-a-season unbeaten. They had played every side except Barcelona and dropped points only once, in a 1-1 draw at home to city rivals Atletico. Ramos had set a new club record; it was the best run in Madrid's history.

Meanwhile, Barcelona had drawn with Betis, and been beaten by Atletico and Espanyol. In three weeks, Barca's

Record

All over...Barcelona celebrate their emphatic victory in Madrid

breakers

Barcelona confirmed their dominance of the 2008-09 Liga with a 6-2 humiliation of arch-rivals Real Madrid in the Santiago Bernabeu

Catch us if you can... Thierry Henry races away from Sergio Ramos

lead went from 12 points to just four, leaving the sports daily *Marca* screaming "the league is reborn" while their counterparts *AS* were declaring "a licence to dream". More importantly, they both insisted, Barcelona were running scared. "Barca: do panic!" read one headline as the two Madrid dailies offered up their version of the same thing: Barcelona were, they ever so pleasantly put it, soiling themselves.

The lead climbed back to six points after Madrid drew with Atletico, then dropped down to four again when Barca drew in Valencia and Madrid hammered Sevilla 4-2 in preparation for the *clasico*. It was, the capital's press insisted, a done deal: Madrid would beat Barcelona and the lead would be just one point with four games remaining. Barcelona would collapse.

"If I was Barcelona, I'd be scared", said Madrid full-back Marcelo. It was the perfect opportunity for Madrid.

What everyone failed to notice was that it was the perfect opportunity for Barcelona too. Everyone talked about the pressure on Barcelona, about the tension created by Madrid's pursuit, the fact that Juande Ramos' team simply wouldn't give up and Barca's frustration of failing to shake them off.

It seemed that every time Barcelona looked in their rear-view mirror, Madrid were there, breathing down their necks. As the Catalan joke had it, Madrid were like a zombie: horrible to look at but they keep on coming and just won't die.

Pressure on Madrid

However, the clues were there for anyone who wanted to see them. With Ramos admitting that the psychological cost was becoming a burden, no one seemed to notice that the pressure was on Madrid as well.

They were chasing and chasing and chasing, winning and winning and winning, but, despite that wobble,

In charge...Guardiola (left) and Juande Ramos

Barcelona remained one step ahead. And all the while the finishing line got closer. Madrid did all they could, but it just wasn't enough as Barcelona kept winning. Success was not in Madrid's hands. Until the *clasico*.

Madrid versus Barcelona was the opportunity Madrid had been waiting for. They had Barcelona where they wanted them. The Catalans were, gloated one Madrid-supporting columnist, surrounded. Cutting the gap was at last in their hands.

The thing was, extending it was also in Barcelona's hands. The opportunity Madrid had been waiting for was the opportunity Barcelona had been waiting for as well: the chance to finally put Madrid out of their misery, to come out fighting.

It was as if Spain's heavyweights were at last climbing into the ring to slug it out, like two fighters who had spent months defeating the rest until

Dejected...Raul and Real Madrid were no match for Barca

Read daily dispatches at worldsoccer.com

Cup kings....Barca completed the first part of a domestic double when they won a record 25th King's Cup by beating Athletic Bilbao 4-1 in the Final at Valencia's Mestalla stadium. Gaizka Toquero headed Bilbao into a ninth-minute lead, but Yaya Toure levelled before Lionel Messi (above), Bojan Krkic and Xavi scored three times in nine minutes shortly after the break

they could avoid each other no longer.

And it was to prove a fight too far for Madrid. Just as they got within reach of Barcelona, the Catalans turned and blew them away. Eighteen matches were not enough and, in the 19th, Barcelona – the last side to overcome Madrid – beat them again to climb seven points clear with just three games remaining.

The hour of truth

It may have been kept alive longer than anyone ever expected, but now the championship really was over. On the eve of the game one newspaper had declared it the hour of truth – and the truth was that Barcelona were too good and Juande Ramos admitted: "The reality is that we're a step below."

It wasn't just that Barcelona defeated Real Madrid, it was that they handed out a thrashing to finally end it all and put a definitive stop to the debate and the stirring.

It finished 6-2, with two goals apiece from Leo Messi and Thierry Henry, plus one each for defenders Carles Puyol and Gerard Pique.

It was the first time Barcelona had ever scored six against Madrid and only the second time Madrid had conceded six at home in their entire history. And in truth it could have been 10 and Messi could have got five. He certainly should have finished off a precise, slick end-to-end move that would surely have been the goal of the season. Iker Casillas made seven saves in the first half alone.

Madrid had even taken the lead, Gonzalo Higuain scoring just before the quarter-hour, but they could never handle the touch, movement and interplay of Barcelona. Pep Guardiola switched Messi from the right wing to a withdrawn centre-forward position and, as Christoph Metzelder admitted, Madrid's centre-backs could not deal with it. "It is not our game to follow a player into midfield," he said. "And that gave them a huge advantage in terms of controlling the ball."

"Messi", declared one Catalan daily, "was Maradona, Cruyff and Best all rolled into one".

It wasn't all about Messi though, Madrid couldn't handle Thierry Henry either as he produced his best performance since moving to Catalonia, constantly getting the better of right-back Sergio Ramos – a victim of his own poor positioning and Madrid's surprising decision to push their defensive line higher than they had at any time in the previous three months. Henry had already delivered three or four warnings when he escaped the defender yet again to win the free-kick for Barcelona's first. He got the second himself and, just after Madrid had been given a glimpse of hope with a Sergio Ramos header that made it 2-3, Henry added the fourth.

> **"Messi was Maradona, Cruyff and Best all rolled into one"**
>
> *One Catalan newspaper's view of the Argentinian's performance against Madrid*

But it would be unfair to mention just two players. Xavi Hernandez was impeccable, providing four assists; Andres Iniesta offered his usual incision; Yaya Toure made a mockery of suggestions that Fernando Gago could be the new Fernando Redondo; and Samuel Eto'o, out of position, proved to be the perfect foil for his attacking colleagues.

On the night they needed it the most, Barcelona had produced their best performance of the season.

On *Catalunya Radio* they were being hailed as the "better than the Dream Team", while *Canal Plus'* commentator insisted: "This Barcelona are the best team I have ever seen."

Madrid's resistance had been as heroic as it was historic, as unbelievable as it was unexpected. However, this time they had no choice but to do just as the Barca fans had been demanding of them and salute the champions. ●

Northern lights

Wolfsburg claimed the title on the final day of a thrilling Bundesliga season

GERMANY

NICK BIDWELL in Munich

BUNDESLIGA HISTORY is littered with the title sob stories of clubs whose anticipated coronation turned to dust in the last 90 minutes of the season. Bayern Munich (1970-71), Werder Bremen (1985-86 and 1994-95), Eintracht Frankfurt (1991-92) and Bayer Leverkusen (1999-00) have all suffered the agony of tripping in the home straight. But there was never much chance of a similar fate befalling pace-setters Wolfsburg this term.

Needing just one point from a home game with Bremen to clinch their first championship, Wolfsburg's players certainly had no cause for insomnia the night before their day of destiny. Not only impregnable in their backyard – 15 wins, one draw – they also had the ideal final-day opponents: a team drained and demoralised by their UEFA Cup Final loss to Shakhtar Donetsk three days previously.

With Wolfsburg's eyes trained on the glittering prize and Bremen saving themselves for their impending German Cup Final against Leverkusen it was no contest. Wolfsburg were one up early on, 3-1 ahead at the break and 5-1 to the good at the final whistle in what was nothing short of massacre in the Lower Saxony sunshine, the sharpshooting once again led by the brilliant Brazilian-Bosnian strike force of Grafite and Edin Dzeko.

Grafite's two goals against Bremen meant he was the league's top scorer with 28, while Dzeko added one to take his tally to 26. The pair are now officially the most prolific Bundesliga strike duo of all time, having surpassed the 53 goals accrued by Bayern superstars Gerd Muller and Uli Hoeness in 1971-72 and 1972-73.

Only in a warped parallel universe would Wolfsburg be deemed not to deserve the championship spoils. No team in the country were better at switching from defence into attack, they scored more goals than anyone else and they never flagged in their enthusiasm, energy levels and appetite for hard work.

Equally impressive was the way a team not at all used to the high Bundesliga plains handled the pressure. Even when coach Felix Magath announced a few weeks before the end of the season that he would be moving to Schalke in the summer, the destabilising effect which many predicted was limited to just one below-par match, a 4-1 thrashing at championship rivals Stuttgart.

The naysayers instantaneously grew in numbers, then headed for the hills as Wolfsburg came roaring back to secure the title with comprehensive wins over Dortmund (3-0), Hannover (5-0) and Bremen.

Perfect fusion

Wolfsburg's triumph, the first league crown to come to this part of northern Germany since Eintracht Braunschweig surprisingly brought home the bacon in 1967, was, in essence, the perfect fusion of the old and the new. A group of a largely unheralded players hungry for their first taste of honours – Italy's World Cup-winning defender Andrea Barzagli apart – meeting the tried and tested leadership know-how of Magath, now in his 14th year as a pro coach.

Magath's success has ensured that the old-school type of leadership is firmly back in vogue. Jurgen Klinsmann's recent sacking at Bayern has, to a great extent, discredited those coaching revisionists for whom psychology, science and a self-help manual come before talent and good old-fashioned application. All the best coaches this term – Magath, Hamburg's Martin Jol (who has since joined Ajax) and Lucien Favre at Hertha Berlin – have been traditionalists, standing for unimpeachable authority and discipline. Bayern are obviously aware of the prevailing trend and next term they will be ruled by Louis Van Gaal's Dutch rod of iron.

> **"A team not used to the high plains of the Bundesliga handled the pressure impressively, even when their coach Felix Magath announced he would be moving to Schalke in the summer"**

Indeed, Bayern's season was saved by another coaching golden oldie in Jupp Heynckes. Under Klinsi, Bayern were in danger of failing to make the Champions League cut. Heynckes, a back-to-basics figure if ever there was one, managed to steady the ship, recording 13 points out of a possible 15 and sealing runners-up spot with a 2-1 win over Stuttgart, who finished third and will have to pre-qualify for the Champions League.

Germany's Europa League participants are Hertha – whose hopes of the Champions League died with an embarrassing 4-0 defeat at relegated Karlsruhe – and Hamburg, who owed their European ticket to a 90th-minute winner from Piotr Trochowski at Frankfurt.

The continental dreams of Borussia Dortmund, much improved this term with Jurgen Klopp at the helm, were scuppered by a 1-1 draw at Borussia Monchengladbach, who were mightily relieved to have clambered out of the relegation quicksand.

Karlsruhe and Arminia Bielefeld were demoted automatically – to be replaced by Mainz and second-division champions Freiburg – while Cottbus' excellent 3-0 victory at home to inconsistent Leverkusen allowed them to fight another day when they face Nurnberg, the third-placed team from the second tier. The play-offs have been an innovation for this season. Their backers seem to believe that more suspense is required in the Bundesliga. Where have they been for the last 50 years? ●

Read daily dispatches at worldsoccer.com

Hungry Wolfsburg...top scorer Grafite is surrounded by his team-mates as they celebrate a first league championship

Big decision...will United hold on to Ronaldo this summer?

United roll on

Alex Ferguson mastered the art of squad rotation as his side claimed a third successive league title

ENGLAND
GAVIN HAMILTON in London

THEIR TACTICAL shortcomings may have been cruelly exposed by Barcelona in the Champions League Final, but Manchester United's domestic dominance remains as strong as ever.

Alex Ferguson's side equalled Liverpool's record of 18 league titles when they won a third successive Premier League crown by a comfortable margin from Liverpool, with Chelsea a distant third and Arsenal a poor fourth.

The stars of the triumph were numerous and reflected in multiple nominations for United players in the end-of-season awards. Six United players – Ryan Giggs, Wayne Rooney, Nemanja Vidic, Rio Ferdinand, Cristiano Ronaldo and Michael Carrick – featured in the top-eight voting for the Football Writers' Association's Footballer of the Year award. The split vote allowed Liverpool's Steven Gerrard to take the prize, just as Tottenham's David Ginola did in 1999 when United won a League, Cup and European treble.

It's almost impossible to name United's first-choice XI, such has been the success of Ferguson in perfecting the art of squad rotation. Old hands Giggs and Paul Scholes still played key roles, while the likes of Gary Neville were overtaken by newcomers such as Brazilian twins Fabio and Rafael.

Further changes are expected this summer, when tough decisions will have to be made about some of the squad. Cristiano Ronaldo was seemingly non-committal over his future after the Champions League Final and United's hierarchy appear reluctant to pay the £25million demanded by the third-party owners of Carlos Tevez's contract in order sign him on a permanent basis.

> **"It's almost impossible to name United's first-choice starting XI, such has been Ferguson's success in the art of squad rotation"**

Liverpool's record

While some United signings were less than successful, with Dimitar Berbatov failing to justify his £28m fee from Tottenham, their rivals will have to raise their game if they are to stop United overtaking Liverpool's record.

Liverpool themselves were too reliant on the injury prone Gerrard and Fernando Torres, while Chelsea revived under interim coach Guus Hiddink but could not close the gap.

Arsenal's season ended with manager Arsene Wenger publicly criticising fans for their unrealistic expectations. His refusal to completely reject renewed interest from Real Madrid may have been an attempt to remind Arsenal directors that his patience is not infinite.

Wenger is too much of a perfectionist to subject himself to the chaotic short-termism that dominates in Madrid, but there is no doubt that Arsenal are in need of reinforcements, notably in central defence and midfield where dominant personalities are lacking.

Aston Villa, who at one stage had threatened Arsenal's fourth spot, trailed off but will challenge again next year, as will sixth-place Everton.

Fulham enjoyed their highest-ever league position thanks to manager Roy Hodgson's no-star ethic. He gambled on the sale of Jimmy Bullard to Hull and made some important transfers from Scandinavia, notably defensive colossus Brede Hangeland.

At the other end of the table, Newcastle's demise dominated the headlines on the final day of the season. Owner Mike Ashley issued a public apology for his numerous mistakes but he must now steer the club away from financial meltdown by getting as many high-earners off the payroll as possible.

Newcastle will not find life easy in the lower division. The demise of Southampton and Norwich, both relegated from the Championship, provided proof of how apparently well-run former top-flight sides can come a cropper when the Premier League parachute payments run out. ●

Miner success, major problems

Shakhtar's UEFA Cup triumph cannot disguise the difficulties facing the country's Euro 2012 organisers

UKRAINE

OLEG ZADERNOVSKY in Kiev

SHAKHTAR DONETSK's fairy tale is complete after the 2-1 victory over Werder Bremen brought Ukraine its first success in the UEFA Cup. The win in Istanbul was payback for the investment of billionaire owner Rinat Akhmetov and also brought Shakhtar parity with great rivals Dynamo Kyiv, who had previously held up their 1975 and 1986 European Cup-winners Cup victories as proof of superiority.

There is an independent spirit about the club from the mining capital of Ukraine – nicknamed the Pitmen – which likes to model itself on Barcelona.

Foreigners have flocked to Donetsk since the middle of the 19th century when a Welsh businessman, John Hughes, established a steel plant and several coal mines in the region. Many left after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and were replaced by a diverse conglomerate of Russians, Tatars, Georgians, Azerbaijanis and other nationalities who came in search of riches in the mines.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Donetsk became a virtually autonomous region, ignoring orders from Ukraine. Just as it did in Barcelona, language became a focal point of resistance and announcements at Shakhtar's stadium are made just in Russian. Club president Akhmetov, an ethnic Tatar born in Donetsk, only gives interviews in Russian.

Akhmetov, 42, is obsessed with security, which is not surprising given that his predecessor Akhat Bragin, who rescued the club from bankruptcy in 1994, was killed by a bomb during a league match the following year. His body was only identified because his Rolex watch survived the blast.

The son of a miner, Akhmetov left university to embark on a business career that has catapulted him into the realms of eastern Europe's richest men. He has ploughed much of his estimated £3billion fortune into the club, spending up to £30million every season on new players, not to mention a £70m training complex and £200m pumped into the new Donbass Arena, which will open in August.

> **"For two hours I forgot the country's financial crisis. Now I know the names of Shakhtar players better than those of my government"**
>
> *Ukraine prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko*

The mayor of Donetsk, Olexander Lukyanchenko, said: "We consider him an anti-Abramovich. He could easily spend his millions abroad by buying an English Premier League club. But Akhmetov is a real patriot of our region and gives our hard-working people the chance to watch top-class European football on a regular basis."

About 7,500 Shakhtar fans – including Ukraine president Viktor Yuschenko and more than half of its MPs – witnessed the historic win in Turkey, while almost 18million watched the match on TV. Among them was the prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, who claimed: "Thanks to football, for two hours I completely forgot the country's financial crisis. Now, I know the names of Shakhtar players even better than the names of the members of my government."

Temporary respite

Unfortunately for Tymoshenko, Shakhtar's UEFA Cup victory provided only temporary respite from Ukraine's economic and organisational ills. UEFA's review of the country's Euro 2012 preparations was a body blow to the organisers. UEFA found important shortcomings in infrastructure and concluded that significant work still needs to be done for Ukraine to meet the minimum requirements for hosting the tournament.

UEFA could confirm only Kiev as a host city for group matches, a quarter-final and a semi-final but could not confirm the capital as venue for the Final. Its refusal to sanction Donetsk, Lviv and Kharkiv as hosts for group matches did not surprise anybody.

"The decision is fully understandable," said football federation president Hryhoriy Surkis. "We need to take urgent action to meet UEFA's six-month deadline."

There remains a strong possibility that Euro 2012 will be taken away from Ukraine entirely. The local organising committees are relying too heavily on government resources which are drying up in a country suffering from a deep economic crisis.

"Hosting Euro 2012 must be the main target of the whole of Ukrainian football," said Shakhtar coach Mircea Lucescu. "The country needs a positive image. Akhmetov has invested heavily in the football infrastructure. But he can't be the only one." ●

Time of toil...Ukraine sports minister Yuriy Pavlenko and UEFA president Michel Platini visit Kiev's Olympic stadium

Fallen heroes

As Iraq prepare to take part in the Confederations Cup, their Asian Cup triumph of 2007 seems a world away

IRAQ

JAMES MONTAGUE

THERE MIGHT have been hardly an Iraqi fan in Jakarta's Bung Karno stadium on July 29, 2007, but it hardly mattered, not any more. The Iraq national team had got used to not playing in front of their own supporters. Baghdad, with its burning sectarianism, had long been off-limits for the game's fans, managers and, of course, its players.

Four years of assassinations, kidnap, war and, before that, state-sponsored tyranny had crippled the country and destroyed its football league. The Lions of Mesopotamia, a rare beacon of national unity and pride that brought Shia, Sunni and Kurd together, was a homeless tribe, playing to near-empty, shabbily-kept stadiums in Dubai or Aleppo or Amman. Yet here they were, celebrating beating Saudi Arabia 1-0 in the Final of the Asian Cup in Indonesia to become continental champions and, with it, a shot at the Confederations Cup.

Younis Mahmoud, the striker named "Desert Fox" for his uncanny ability to silently find himself in the right place at the right time, was held aloft in almost sacrificial reverence in front of the few Iraqi flags that dotted the stands after scoring the solitary goal. It was singularly the most romantic against-the-odds sporting story of recent times; of a team that had overcome huge odds and won Asia's biggest prize against a background of bloodshed and chaos.

In the modern history of Iraqi football, victory and unspeakable horror have become intertwined with depressing regularity. While always being considered a regional power, Iraq didn't actually make the World Cup finals until Mexico 86. And it wasn't until years later that the truth emerged about the team's motivational techniques.

Concrete ball

Saddam Hussein's unhinged son Uday had been handed the Olympic association to run – which he did in typically bloodthirsty style, torturing players with electrical cables following bad results. One failed World Cup qualification bid saw Uday force the team to play barefoot with a concrete ball. When the Americans stormed the Olympic HQ in 2003 they found a torture rack in the basement, though Iraqis greeted the news with only faint surprise.

Ahmed-Rahim Hamed, a young striker during Mexico 86, who coached the Iraqi team in 2007 despite fleeing Baghdad after receiving death threats, paid a high price for a bad game. "You knew that if you didn't play well, Uday would do something bad," Rahim recalled. "I loved Kevin Keegan and I had a perm like him. After one game [that Iraq lost] Uday shaved everyone's hair. That's when I lost my perm."

A month before that victorious night in Indonesia, I had followed "Captain Rahim", as the players called him, and the Iraqi team to Amman, Jordan, where they were due to play a regional tournament against the likes of hated rivals Iran and Syria. The team's newly-appointed Brazilian manager, Jorvan Vieira, had taken refuge from the ferocious sun in the shadows of the King Abdullah stadium during his first training session.

Vieira didn't know the players well; they weren't too familiar with him either. "This is the hardest job in the world, definitely," he told me. "These boys – I have to deal with many, many problems: social, political, internal. Most of these players don't know where they are. Every minute the situation changes."

It changed so often, in fact, that one member of the team's staff never

> **"You knew Uday would do something bad if you didn't play well"**
>
> *Former Iraq striker Ahmed-Rahim Hamed on the terror meted out by Saddam Hussein's son*

Flying the flag...Iraqi face their standard as they line up with Saudi Arabia before the Asian Cup Final in Jakarta

made it to Amman. "We lost our physio two days before we got here," said Vieira. "A bomb exploded in Baghdad and he was passing by. He was on his way to the travel agent to buy his ticket to come here."

The dangers were such that most players chose not to return home. Goalkeeper Noor Sabri had seen his brother-in-law killed a few weeks previously. Midfielder Haitham Kadhim watched as gunmen stormed on to the pitch during a match in Baghdad to execute one of his team-mates.

"I'd lost two members of my family," explained Hawar Mulla Mohammed, the team's Kurdish striker who this season became the first Iraqi to play, and score, in the Champions League with Anorthosis of Cyprus. "It's difficult when you have no safety. I had to pick up my two guns before going to practice because I'd been threatened. You can buy guns anywhere in Baghdad. You need them. I don't go back any more."

Every member of the team had been threatened on two fronts: by insurgents, who feared this single remaining totem of Iraqi nationalistic pride, and by criminals, who targeted the players and their families for ransom. To make sure they stay out of their clutches, almost all of the players ply their trade in more lucrative, and safer, leagues in Qatar or Saudi Arabia – an issue which is starting to breed resentment back in Iraq.

Vieira's job in securing Iraq's first major piece of silverware was immense. He was fourth choice for the job but managed to knock together a team and get them to the Asian Cup on a shoestring, flying economy class on a gruelling 16-hour flight to south-east Asia, with just four weeks preparation. A 3-1 victory over Australia signalled their potential, but it was the semi-final against South Korea that was pivotal. After winning the penalty shoot-out, news filtered through to the team that a suicide bomber had blown himself up near a group of cheering fans in Baghdad.

> **"I had to pick up my two guns before going to practice because I had been threatened"**
>
> *Hawar Mulla Mohammed on how the players were targeted*

One choice

The death toll that night, which also included fans killed accidentally by celebratory gunfire, hit 50 and the team discussed quitting. But after watching a news report where a bereaved woman, hysterical after her son's death, begged the team to continue in his memory, there was only one choice and fate would produce the just result.

In a country so devoid of good news and inclusive institutions to be proud of, the Lions of Mesopotamia reminded a nation on the brink of imploding the importance of unity.

What is for sure, though, is that as a modicum of stability has returned, Iraqi football has endured a fall from grace. Vieira quit in the afterglow of victory, saying he would "go crazy" if he stayed. A string of coaches came and went, sacked in increasingly bizarre ways, with ex-Norway coach Egil Olsen being unceremoniously dumped for not travelling to Iraq.

A returning Vieira was fired earlier this year after a disastrous Gulf Cup campaign. Political intrigue and claims of sectarianism stung the FA, too, which was disbanded by the Ministry of Youth and Sport. While the FA, led by all-time record goalscorer Hussein Saeed, was seen as a largely Sunni organisation linked closely with Saddam, the Ministry was in the hands of Shia politicians. The Ministry soon backed down when FIFA threatened to throw Iraq out of World Cup qualifying. It might have been a more graceful exit than the one they had to endure: eliminated because they failed to get their paperwork in on time which, rightly, pointed out Qatar had fielded an ineligible player against them.

The Confederations Cup may seem like an irrelevance but don't tell the Iraqis. This is their one chance to remind the world that this generation of talented players was no flash in the pan, a quaint sporting aberration dreamed up in a Hollywood script. They've faced much tougher roads to victory. Discount them at your peril. ●

Divide and rule

Mohamed Bin Hammam survived an acrimonious challenge in an election which exposed the bitter divisions in Asian football

ASIA

MICHAEL CHURCH in Kuala Lumpur

TWO VOTES were all that stood between Asian football and a major political crisis as the confederation's president, Mohamed Bin Hammam, retained his seat on FIFA's executive committee.

Hammam, the incumbent, held off the challenge of Bahrain's Sheikh Salman Al Khalifa to win a hugely divisive election by 23 votes to 21, with two of the 46 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) member nations spoiling their ballot papers.

"I would like to thank you all for conducting the perfect election," Hammam told delegates after his win at the AFC congress in Kuala Lumpur. "You have really shown the world the meaning of democracy. For that reason I would like to congratulate each and every one of you. It was really a very close competition."

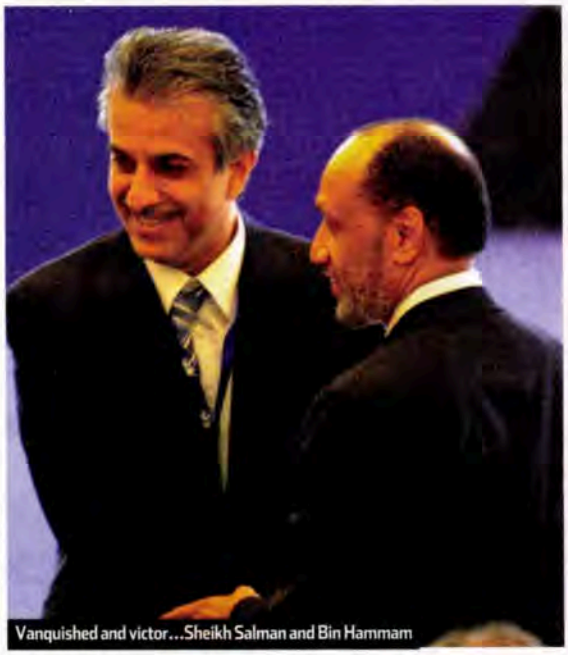
After a bitter and very public campaign to discredit Hammam's seven-year reign at the head of the AFC, the Qatari clung on to not only keep his place on the game's decision-making council but to stay in control of the regional body.

The opposition had turned the vote into a referendum on Hammam's time in charge of the confederation and, as a result, the 60-year-old had threatened to stand down should he be defeated.

With the heavyweights of Asian football lining up against him – Japan, South Korea, China and Saudi Arabia were all in the anti-Hammam camp – the outcome was always going to be extremely close.

And though the margin of Hammam's victory should have been greater – the two spoilt votes were both cast for him – the appearance now is of a continent more deeply divided than ever.

Hammam, however, has proven himself to be a true survivor after holding off the challenge from Sheikh Salman, whose campaign was spearheaded by a well-orchestrated opposition.



Vanquished and victor...Sheikh Salman and Bin Hammam

The Bahraini prince's campaign was backed – some would say hijacked – by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), who brought almost their entire staff from its base in Kuwait to lobby for votes, while Sheikh Salman also had the very vociferous support of FIFA vice-president Dr Chung Mong-joon.

Former AFC general secretary Peter Velappan, the face of Asian football for almost three decades, added his voice to the anti-Hammam drive.

The charges laid against Hammam were numerous, with anger growing at his desire to move the confederation away from its traditional base of Malaysia, through to attempts to block Kuwait, Laos, East Timor, Mongolia, Afghanistan and Brunei from voting in the election.

Hammam was labelled "a dictator" and the confederation's finances were called into question, with debate focusing on the amounts – £50million over the next four years – committed to the Asian Champions League.

The tension mounted in the days leading up to the vote as the opposition turned up the heat on Hammam, with the attacks becoming personal and increasingly unpleasant.

> **"You have really shown the world the meaning of democracy"**
>
> *Bin Hammam applauds the AFC delegates after his narrow victory*

Velappan was forced to issue a public apology after asking delegates to vote against Hammam and "send him back to the desert", while Chung questioned the Qatari's mental health, claiming he needed to be sent "to hospital, not to FIFA".

Through it all Hammam kept a low profile and, on the day of the congress, made several key concessions to take the sting out of the opposition.

First, he relented on his attempts to relocate the confederation's headquarters, then handed the six nations who were threatened with being barred from voting in the election the right to participate. However, he refused to back down on his spending plans for the next four years despite criticism – led by Kuwait's Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad, who also heads the OCA – that the budget would hamper development in some of the continent's lesser nations.

Lousy product

"Our product is lousy," Hammam said. "If there is a match between Manchester United and Chelsea, and two clubs from your country, who will you watch? Or a game between two Asian teams or Real Madrid and Barcelona, who will you watch? We need to improve our product first.

"We have an income of $130m [£80m] for the years 2009 to 2012. We want to compensate our clubs with the majority of our finances."

The budget was approved by the congress in a victory every bit as significant as Hammam's success in the fight for the executive committee seat and, despite the vitriol hurled in his direction in previous months, he stressed he would not change the way he runs the confederation.

"I'm not going to change my style of administering Asian football," he said. "I have had full democracy and transparency since I became president. I respect the laws and the statutes of the AFC and I respect the laws of Asia. I never practiced anything beyond that. All 46 members are equal."

Hammam also reached out in an attempt to heal a wound that will likely take much more than words to assuage. "Asia needs all of us, both camps," he said. "We need to work hand in hand. We are not amateur people. We are not children. I believe we would all like to see fair play, whether it is in football or elections.

"I hope the future is going to bring trust and confidence in the executive committee of Asia. I hope also you will continue to trust me." ●

I'm the No1...Janko is hugged by team-mate Remo Meyer after completing his hat-trick in a league game against Austria Wien

Marc of class

Salzburg striker Janko has been the star of the Austrian season

AUSTRIA

HARRY MILTNER in Vienna

TWO NAMES have dominated Austrian football this season: striker Marc Janko, whose incredible goalscoring record took Salzburg to the domestic title, and new national coach Didi Constantini, who has led the country back to success in the World Cup qualifiers.

Following two seasons plagued by injury, Janko has finally been able to show his true skills. Going into the last game of the season, the 25-year-old had scored an unbelievable 39 times, leaving him just two short of Hans Krankl's all-time Austrian league record and keeping him in the hunt for the ESM Golden Shoe, along with Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o and Diego Forlan of Atletico Madrid.

"It is an amazing feeling to be in a fight with such stars. Krankl and Eto'o are legends, while I am nobody in international football," says the modest Janko.

However, his great scoring power, paired with his 6ft 5in physical presence and technical skill, has quickly put him on foreign scouts' notepads, particularly those from the English Premier League.

"Yes, we have received offers from several clubs, and it's always been my dream to play in England, so I will do everything to make this dream come true," admits Janko. Although he has extended his contract with Salzburg until 2013, he is more than likely to move if the right fee is offered to the club's owner, energy drink tycoon Didi Mateschitz.

While Mateschitz's favourite player is being chased by the likes of Tottenham Hotspur, Blackburn Rovers, Hoffenheim of Germany and Roma, Janko's management team have not yet started negotiating.

"There is still enough time," says his agent Georg Stangassinger. "Marc has been focusing on winning the league with Salzburg, breaking Krankl's record and earning himself the Golden Shoe. He has a valid contract and we will have to see what concrete offers come in."

> **It's always been my dream to play in England so I will do everything to make it come true**
>
> *In-demand Janko is looking to new horizons*

Revived hopes

Meanwhile, on the international front, Constantini has revived hopes of Austria's qualification for the World Cup in South Africa.

Having learnt his trade as assistant to legendary Austria manager Ernst Happel back in the 1990s, Constantini made his name in his homeland as something of a "saviour" by avoiding relegation three times – as caretaker coach with Austria Wien, Karnten and Pasching.

He was handed the national job after newly appointed Austrian FA president Leo Windtner fired Karel Bruckner and, despite suffering a long list of injured players, Constantini led the side to a 2-1 home win against Romania in his first game.

"I am not a messiah, but the players needed a change in style," said Innsbruck-born Constantini. "I would never allow myself to criticise a colleague. However, it seemed time for a different approach and so far it has worked out quite well."

Austria started the campaign with a 3-1 home triumph over France, but then lost in Lithuania and at home to Serbia to fall into crisis. The Euro 2008 co-hosts still have it all to do, lying fourth in their group after five games, three points adrift off France, who occupy the play-off spot.

"We are in a tough group and so our chances are slim – but giving up is not on my agenda," says Constantini. ●

Crisis management

The swine flu epidemic sparked a serious fallout between Mexican football and its South American neighbours

MEXICO

MARTIN DEL PALACIO LANGER
in Mexico City

AS WITH many other levels of Mexican society, football has been severely affected by the swine flu epidemic which hit the country in April and May. The suspension of tournaments, empty stadiums and a breakdown in relations with the rest of South America were the most important consequences.

Although no player was directly affected by the disease, the first club to suffer were Guadalajara, who travelled to Chile to play a Libertadores Cup match against Everton in Valparaiso just as the epidemic was declared. The Chivas players were subjected to intense medical check-ups and Chilean fans mocked them in a shopping mall the day before the match.

The players were outraged, with midfielder Gonzalo Pineda claiming he had felt "like a leper" during the incident. But the taunts continued in the stadium and, as a result, defender Hector Reynoso reacted in the worst possible way by coughing and spitting in the face of Everton's Argentinian striker Sebastian Penco.

The Chilean media reacted furiously and the South American confederation (CONMEBOL) suspended Reynoso for the rest of the Libertadores. In Mexico, however, the reaction was far more moderate. While supporters and journalists condemned the 28-year-old's gesture, most felt the act was justified given the way the team had been provoked before and during the match.

A few days earlier, Mexico's government announced the closure of public offices, restaurants and bars to try to stop the spread of the epidemic. The Mexican FA backed the measure and decided to play all matches in Mexico City behind closed doors. This was extended to the rest of the country the following week.

With the situation getting worse by the day, CONCACAF were forced to cancel the semi-finals of its Under-17 World Cup qualifiers in the northern city of Tijuana, postpone the beach soccer World Cup qualifiers in the west-coast town of Puerto Vallarta and delay the CONCACAF Champions League Final in the south-eastern resort of Cancun.

However, the main problem was still the Libertadores. Under pressure from Brazilian and Argentinian teams, CONMEBOL announced that San Luis and Guadalajara would not be able to play their remaining games in Mexico and asked the Mexican FA to find alternative venues. Colombia, which was Mexico's first choice, refused to host the matches, and the Chilean government also declined after an initial acceptance by the Chilean FA.

Perceived discrimination

The rejections generated widespread anger in Mexico. The government had already made official complaints to those nations who were closing their borders to Mexican citizens, while in the country at large there was a sense of injustice among the people at the perceived discrimination towards all things Mexican.

Feelings were heightened because Mexico has a long history of solidarity with South America. In the mid-1970s the country received thousands of refugees from the dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Chile, while, in a football context, the Mexican league has always been a paradise for players from those countries. The lack of support offered during the crisis was taken as a personal affront by Mexican fans.

After a final refusal by the South Americans, this time after a proposal to play matches in the United States, the Mexican FA negotiated an agreement with FIFA vice-president Julio Grondona and CONMEBOL that the two Mexican teams would leave the 2009 edition of the Libertadores Cup and, as compensation, receive two more places in the 2010 edition.

Justino Compean, president of the Mexican FA, announced the withdrawal of Chivas and San Luis at a press conference, thinking that CONMEBOL president Nicolas Leoz would confirm the news half an hour later and announce the remainder of the agreement. But the Paraguayan made a 360-degree turn at the last minute and, in a press release, stated that the Mexican teams should take part in play-offs at the stadiums of their South American rivals.

Furious at what he considered a betrayal, Compean called a second press conference in which he announced a complete break with CONMEBOL and retired all Mexican teams from every tournament in South America. The decision was cheered unanimously by the press and fans, who were still outraged by what they consider a discriminating attitude by

> "There was a sense of injustice among the people at the perceived discrimination towards Mexican citizens"

Behind closed doors...the scene at recent local league games

the South American organisation.

While it may appear otherwise, the decision taken by the Mexican leadership was anything but impulsive. The two major sponsors of the Libertadores Cup are Banco Santander and Fox Sports. The first has large interests in Mexico, while the second gets its best ratings in the Mexican communities living in the United States. In addition, other big Mexican companies, such as Telmex and Grupo Modelo, are also involved in sponsorship of the competition.

The absence of Mexican teams from the tournament would have a negative effect financially for all of the sponsors, so they have already begun to pressure CONMEBOL into negotiating a return as soon as possible. The South American organisation has not yet clarified its position, but it appears to be between a rock and a hard place. The most likely outcome would seem to be a new agreement, between all parties, with very favourable conditions for the Mexican teams.

Returned to normal

Meanwhile, things have gradually returned to normal in Mexico. Life on the streets seems to be as it was before the epidemic, while the Mexican league play-offs started with half-capacity stadiums on the recommendation of the government.

Toluca and Pachuca, the country's two best teams over the past 10 years, were big favourites to meet in the Final – until Toluca suffered a surprise defeat at the hands of Ciudad Juarez in the quarter-finals.

At the other end of the table, the relegation of Necaxa was confirmed in the last game of the season. The Aguascalientes-based club, who have never played in the second tier before and are one of the most traditional teams in Mexican football, dominated the league in the 1990s but have struggled badly in the last three years.

The *Rayos* (Lightning) are owned by media giant Televisa and needed a victory against America, who are owned by the same company, to avoid the drop. The general feeling was that they would gift Necaxa the points, but America won without too much trouble to rule out any suspicion of foul play – which has been one of the few bits of good news for Mexican football in these difficult times. ●

Make mine a double...president Socrates Kokkalis joins his players in celebrating their Greek league and Cup triumphs

The Kokkalis dynasty

Olympiakos and their all-powerful president are celebrating yet another championship

GREECE

LOU ECONOMOPOULOS in Athens

SOCRATES KOKKALIS, a 71-year-old billionaire, is the driving force behind a powerful dynasty at Olympiakos, who won their 37th league title this season.

His wheeling and dealing over the last 16 years has led to the most popular team in Greece winning 12 of the last 13 domestic championships, five Cups and two Greek Super Cups.

During his reign the Piraeus-based club have also returned to their original stadium, Karaiskakis, where a totally rebuilt £50million ground was opened in 2004.

"Olympiakos have the best team, the most loyal supporters, the most modern facilities and the best administrative staff," says telecoms tycoon Kokkalis, who took over the heavily indebted club in 1993 when its previous presidents, George Koskotas and Argyris Saliarelis, were jailed for financial misdemeanours.

Kokkalis – who cleared his own name seven years ago following accusations of espionage, fraud and money-laundering – managed to get Olympiakos back on their feet with the help of state legislation which erased most of the club's debts. He then dug deep into his pockets to bring in top-notch players such as Christian Karembeu and Rivaldo, as well as leading coaches Dusan Bajevic and Oleg Protasov, to spark a dynasty which appears to have no end – even if few coaches have had time to settle.

Kokkalis holds the Greek record for the most coaching changes, which includes three in one season and 11 in just four years. Ernesto Valverde is the latest to leave the club – despite delivering a domestic double this season he has been replaced by Cypriot-Georgian Temuri Ketsbaia.

"I have given everything for this team for the last 16 years," Kokkalis told the club's board recently. "I have put in £130m from my own pocket. Is there anybody more Olympiakos than me?"

Kokkalis also opened up the club to outside investment in 2003 when he allowed supporters to buy membership. Today some 80,000 are registered members and a recent poll indicated that 30 per cent of the Greek population claim to be Olympiakos fans.

"We made him an offer we considered serious but it was not accepted. It was decided not to renew his contract"

Olympiakos explain the departure of Valverde (above)

Founded in 1925, Olympiakos may have won more leagues (37) and Cups (24) than any other Greek club, but when it comes to European achievement the ball stops rolling. Their best run was reaching the quarter-finals of the Champions League in 1999, where they lost to Juventus.

The lack of European success has always irked Kokkalis and over the past couple of years his investment in players and coaches has been geared to achieving that goal, albeit with limited success. Valverde paid the price for failing to qualify for the Champions League group stages, followed by an early exit from the UEFA Cup.

Standing ovation

Valverde, though, was given a standing ovation at Olympiakos' domestic title celebrations at Karaiskakis stadium in early May, when 20,000 fans also said goodbye to captain Predrag Djordjevic, retiring after 13 years with the club, and fellow Serb Darko Kovacevic, forced to quit earlier this season due to health problems.

Kokkalis had offered Valverde a £900,000 contract for next season, plus £660,000 in bonuses if the team did well, but balked at the coach's reported demands of a £1.35m salary.

Club spokesman Yiannis Moralis said: "We made an offer which we considered serious but it was not accepted. Accordingly, the board decided not to renew his contract."

Djordjevic parted on much better terms, saying: "The 13 years I have spent at this big family are particularly important as I have had some unique moments and won many titles."

The 36-year-old can look back on a career in which he won 12 league titles and five Cups. But Olympiakos have not always been so dominant.

The legendary team of the 1950s won six straight domestic titles from 1954 to 1959, but the 1960s and early 1970s yielded only two championships and six Cups. When shipping tycoon Nikos Goulandris took over as president in 1972 things turned around once again, with three straight league crowns from 1973 to 1975.

Another dark era followed, from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s under Koskotas and Saliarelis, and the worst season of all was 1987-88 when Olympiakos finished eighth after flirting with relegation. But then came Kokkalis...and the rest is history. ●

Greek season review, see page 87

The price isn't right

The game in Africa is still badly undervalued when it comes to fulfilling its financial potential

THE MARKETABILITY of the African Nations Cup, the prime property of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), has never been higher.

Its next edition, in Angola next year, might well turn out to be a logistical nightmare, but for pure footballing fantasy it is likely to be the best-watched yet as there are more and more genuine world stars now coming from the continent, plus the fact that the Nations Cup is being hosted just six months prior the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

The potential jackpot for African football is valued at £70million – revenue that has the potential to give the continent's game a massive, and much-needed, shot in the arm.

But it is a price tag that has yet to find any suitors. The South African mobile company MTN, who sponsored the last two Nations Cup tournaments, have walked away and their Nigerian rivals GLO can't find the cash to replace them.

A marketing package from the start of 2010 to 2016, encompassing the next four Nations Cups tournaments, has been out on offer in the market place for more than a year. French agency SportFive, who handle the bulk of CAF's TV deals, might have put a reasonable valuation on the product but they are not exactly finding the door to their Paris offices being knocked down in the rush.

Given the economic downturn this would seem predictable, so while African football might bristle at having to lower its price it would seem it must make some concessions or do without – which would have disastrous consequences at a time when African football is supposed to be riding the crest of the World Cup wave.

The African game has been poorly undervalued for decades, but now, just as it is finally coming of age, the commercial opportunity to exploit its potential is markedly narrowed by the economic malaise.

The 2010 World Cup was supposed to be the impetus for a big leap forward but few seem to have benefited with the finals just 12 months away.

> **"The World Cup is bound to give a big lift to the local South African league, but the same benefits elsewhere in Africa are unlikely unless the Nations Cup gets decent sponsorship"**

Spiral of underdevelopment

Football in central Africa is stuck in the same spiral of underdevelopment that characterises all walks of life in most African countries, while it is the competition between the myriad Middle Eastern satellite networks in the Arabic-speaking north that is helping the regional game to grow there rather than any spin-off around next year's World Cup.

For clubs and federations in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, their TV rights are worth much more than before and the Arab Champions League was created specifically to boost the coffers of the elite clubs.

Meanwhile, in South Africa the domestic league has always been commercially strong, driven by a long-standing sponsorship from South African Breweries that lasted for more than four decades. They have now stepped aside but there has been no shortage of replacements and a bank now pays for the title sponsorship of the league.

But it is from TV that South African clubs are earning previously unheard of riches; small change in comparison to their European compatriots maybe, but still enough to see a marked improvement in the standard of the game and the personnel involved in it.

A five-year deal worth around £100m is among the top 10 of its kind worldwide. Clubs now have the cash to hire better coaches and bring back players from Europe with offers of comparative wages. South Africa will become even more of a halfway house for top African talent that is on its way north to Europe but in need of a little more competitive experience.

The World Cup is bound to give an even bigger lift to the local league, with improved facilities and a bigger international profile expected after the finals, but the same benefits elsewhere in Africa are unlikely unless the Nations Cup gets decent sponsorship.

Africa's cause was not helped by the recent Abidjan stadium disaster, in which 19 people died, as once again the greed and disorganisation that pervades the game on the continent was so tragically highlighted.

Such a scenario plays itself out alarmingly too often and it is this image that, ultimately, might answer why African football cannot get its asking price. ●

Local boost...South African clubs, such as Kaizer Chiefs (in yellow) and Orlando Pirates, will undoubtedly benefit from the 2010 World Cup

Star searching

With the notable exception of David Beckham, the Designated Player rule is working well

USA

PAUL GARDNER in New York

IN LATE 2006 the Major League Soccer (MLS) board of governors introduced the Designated Player (DP) rule. The move was a tacit acknowledgment that something needed to be done to jazz up the league as its rigid £1.5million-per-team salary cap – which once was seen as essential to financial survival – was now deemed to be having a damaging effect on the game's growth.

The world's great players had always been beyond the financial means of MLS; now even good players were increasingly unavailable.

However, the DP was designed to change all that. Each club could now sign a player who could be paid whatever the club chose and only £264,000 (the MLS maximum salary) would count against their salary limit.

The DP regulation, in a moment of wild fantasy, was dubbed the "David Beckham rule" because he represented exactly the sort of star attraction the league needed to liven up its image. Within two months, the fantasy had become reality as Beckham joined Los Angeles Galaxy.

Whether the former England captain's time with Galaxy has been a success or not depends on your criteria, but a recent comment by MLS commissioner Don Garber summed up the situation.

> "The world's great players had always been beyond the finances of MLS; now even good players were unavailable"

Talking about the hard times facing all sports in the US, Garber commented that even the New York Yankees baseball team had empty seats in their spanking new stadium – for which he received the tart reply from Yankees president Randy Levine: "Hey Don, worry about Beckham not the Yankees. Even he wants out of your league."

A cutting remark, perhaps, but one that has a positive side as well, for there was a time, not that long ago, when the president of America's most famous baseball team would not have even been aware of pro soccer, much less be able to name one of its players.

The Beckham case is, of course, exceptional – as exceptional, in fact, as his reported £4.3m annual salary: a figure no other DP has come close to.

Since Beckham, there have been six other DP signings, with a success rate of about 50 per cent.

Top of the flops is Denilson, who was hailed as "probably the best player in MLS" on his arrival at Dallas in 2007, but then got a reputation as an unproductive show-off and went home to Brazil after just eight games.

Injury undermined two other

Fire starter...Chicago's Cuauhtemoc Blanco (in red) has been a big hit in MLS

highly anticipated DPs. Red Bulls' Claudio Reyna, the former US national team captain, managed only 27 games in nearly two seasons, chalking up no goals and only three assists, before retiring from the game. And Argentina's Marcelo Gallardo started well with DC United in 2008 before injury restricted him to 15 games and he went back to Argentina and signed for River Plate.

The big successes have been Mexico's Cuauhtemoc Blanco (salary £1.9m) with Chicago Fire and Colombian striker Juan Pablo Angel (£1.2m) with Red Bulls. Blanco has proved immensely popular with Mexican-American fans wherever he has played, while Angel was a key player in the Red Bulls team that reached last season's MLS Cup Final.

The DP upgrade

Red Bulls were beaten 3-1 that day by Columbus Crew, one of several teams who chose not to have a DP last season. That has changed now though, with former Argentina international Guillermo Barros Schelotto, who was Crew's best player last term, becoming a new type of DP: the DP upgrade. To ensure that he remained their player, the Crew moved him into its DP slot and upped his salary accordingly.

DC United made a similar move this season, with Brazilian striker Luciano Emilio becoming the league's the second DP upgrade.

Interestingly, there was also one downgrade, with Argentinian forward Claudio Lopez, who had been Kansas City Wizards' DP in 2008, choosing to remain with the club this year even though it meant taking a pay cut as he was deprived of his DP status.

There has been only one new DP signed this season: Sweden's Freddie Ljungberg who has joined newcomers Seattle Sounders.

Then there is the man who started it all, David Beckham.

Certainly he attracted an enormous amount of attention to MLS and to Galaxy, but he contributed pathetically little on the field before running off to Milan. But while that elaborate and cash-soaked transaction may not have worked out quite the way it was supposed to, it would be a mistake to assume that the DP idea itself has been a failure.

The thinking behind the DP – to inject a nucleus of better players into the league and to widen the range of players from which MLS coaches can recruit – remains very much in operation. While the number of DP signings has been small – nine out of the 15 MLS clubs do not have a DP – the process has unquestionably resulted in a livelier league.

Leading man...Red Bulls' Juan Pablo Angel (in white)

Meanwhile, when deciding to spend their money on a DP, MLS general managers and coaches seem to target only goalscorers and creative midfielders. As commissioner Garber made clear soon after the rule was passed, he didn't expect MLS clubs to use it "to sign goalkeepers".

Of the 10 DP signings and upgrades, plus the one downgrade, seven involved Latin-American players – something that represents a dramatic change in emphasis by MLS coaches who have traditionally been highly pro-European in their player choices. By breaking that mindset, the introduction of the DP has already made a major contribution to the growth of MLS.

The DP regulation has always had an experimental air to it and as such constitutes a cautious dipping of MLS toes into the wild world of global soccer finances.

The experiment was initially given three years to make sense and unless it is renewed – in its current or revised form – it expires at the end of this year.

> **"While David Beckham's elaborate and cash-soaked transaction may not have worked out quite the way it was supposed to, it would be a mistake to assume the DP idea itself has been a failure"**

Suggested revisions include cancelling the clause that rules that the first £275,000 (increased from the original £264,000) of a DP's salary must count against the club's salary cap and not allowing a club to have more than one DP – at the moment a club can have two, but it has to acquire its second slot from another club, usually by a player trade. The Red Bulls are the only club with two DP slots, but they use only one of them.

It can – and no doubt will – be argued that the scheme has had little effect because 60 per cent of the league's clubs have ignored it. Perhaps the current global instability is also telling against it. But it would be short-sighted of MLS to drop the DP rule; it is, after all, a purely voluntary arrangement and no club is being forced to sign a big-money player.

With the excruciating exception of the Beckham deal, the scheme has worked well. After all, without it, it is unlikely that class players such as Blanco, Schelotto, Angel and Ljungberg would be in MLS. ●

Up for it...Brazilian clubs Palmeiras (in green) and Sport Recife clash in the last 16 of this year's Libertadores Cup

Taking it seriously

Brazilian clubs are now the dominant force in the Libertadores Cup

TIM VICKERY in Rio de Janeiro

HISTORICALLY the Libertadores Cup has been Argentina's show, but a change seems to be under way – as highlighted by the group phase of this year's competition, when three Argentinian clubs were eliminated while all five Brazilian representatives went through to the knockout rounds.

The 50th version of South America's premier club competition is, therefore, an appropriate moment to look back and attempt to make sense of the dynamic.

First contested in 1960, the dominant clubs in the early years were from two countries with contrasting views of the Libertadores: Penarol of Uruguay and Santos from Brazil.

With an internal market limited by its tiny population, Uruguay was keen for an expansion of the tournament, proposing two entrants per country instead of one. When this idea was approved, however, Brazil pulled out in protest.

Despite their initial success, Brazil, the continent's only Portuguese speakers, had not been sold on the competition. Santos decided they would rather travel the globe playing friendlies, so there was no Brazilian participation in 1966, 1969 or 1970.

In their absence, Argentinian clubs took over and began an extraordinary record of having a team in the Final every year from 1963 to 1979.

Successive wins

There were long runs of successive wins – which was easier in those days because the holders only entered the competition towards the end – and as well as Racing's lone triumph in 1967, Independiente were champions in 1964 and 1965, and four years in a row from 1972 to 1975, Estudiantes had three successive victories, from 1968 to 1970, and Boca Juniors triumphed in 1977 and 1978.

This run of sustained success gained the Libertadores an important place in the folklore of Argentinian football, with the fans inventing songs about it and players' reputations being made in the thick of the action.

> **"Argentina may still lead Brazil 21-13 in title wins – but of the last eight finalists, six have been Brazilian"**

The impressive run of consecutive finalists came to an end in 1979 – a year after Argentina staged and won the World Cup. It maybe significant that 1978's international success suddenly put Argentinian players in the shop window and, as more and more of them moved abroad, so the country's dominance faded.

True, there were three wins in a row – with Independiente in 1984, Argentinos Juniors in 1985 and River Plate in 1986 – but the triumphs became more sparse. Newell's Old Boys reached the Final in 1988 and 1992, Velez Sarsfield won in 1994, and River were successful again in 1996, but a different pattern was emerging.

In the years after River's second win, their great rivals Boca came through as the most consistent side in the competition, claiming the title in 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2007, as well as finishing runners-up in 2004. However, no other Argentinian club has reached the Final during that

period, while 10 different Brazilian sides have done so.

Argentina may still lead Brazil 21-13 in title wins – but of the last eight finalists, six have been Brazilian.

The fact that Brazilian football has more strength in depth than Argentina is not hard to explain as the country's population is almost five times bigger, making it easier for clubs to replace players transferred abroad. But that was always the case. What has changed is Brazil's attitude to the Libertadores. Once, it entered almost grudgingly; now the competition is top priority.

Change of thinking

A key date in this change of thinking is 1994, when the hyperinflation that had corroded Brazil's economy was overcome. Before then, clubs would meet their financial commitments merely by paying late. But now minds have started to concentrate less on the loss-making state championships and more on competitions which give a greater financial return. Boosted by TV money, that means the Libertadores.

A new expression was born in Brazilian football and "the G4" was used to refer to the teams finishing in the top four places in the league. These clubs – along with the national Cup winner – qualify for the Libertadores, so getting into the G4 is almost as important as winning the title.

Throw in the fact that the current league format (which replaced play-offs in 2003) means that only the best Brazilian clubs now tend to qualify for the Libertadores and the country's rise is hardly surprising.

It could also be argued that there is a domestic factor in Argentina's decline. With two separate championships held each year – the opening and the closing tournaments – it may be that, especially under financial pressure, shorter competitions develop a short-term mentality.

These days, many Argentinian clubs bring in players on loan or short-term contracts, which is rarely a sound and successful way to build a team. It is no coincidence that Boca, the country's big success story, work an entirely different model. They have adapted to the realities of the global market by striving to produce stars which they then sell to Europe to finance and maintain a competitive squad.

Brazilian clubs such as Sao Paulo and Internacional are just two of those who have been watching and learning from Boca – and reaping the benefits with Libertadores success. ●

Entrance exam

The Kosovo national team are still waiting for international recognition

KOSOVO

STEVE MENARY

THE MOST patient manager in international football has nearly had enough. However, Edmond Rugova is not fed up with his players losing matches; he's just exasperated at not being able to find them any fixtures.

Nearly three years after returning to the land of his birth, national coach Rugova is no closer to finding regular games for his team despite Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in February 2008.

"We've done all we can," sighs the former Yugoslav youth international who left home for New York Cosmos in the 1980s. "This Platini guy had a meeting in Serbia in March and said UEFA is not political and he can do nothing until Kosovo is admitted to the UN [United Nations] and that will take some time. He also says he wants to see football keep developing here, but what does that mean?"

UEFA's entry regulations were tweaked a few years ago to appease Spain and keep out Gibraltar. So, despite nearly 60 nations around the world recognising Kosovo's split from Serbia, Rugova and his team are left kicking their heels.

> **"This Platini guy said UEFA is not political and he can do nothing until Kosovo is admitted to the UN"**
>
> *Edmond Rugova*

In March 2009, Rugova managed to arrange a game in Sweden with Allsvenskan side Malmo. He says: "We went there with a different name and had to call ourselves the Super Liga of Kosovo Selection and not a national team to disguise ourselves."

Two exiled Kosovars, Labinot Harbuzi and Agon Mehmeti, play for Malmo and, if Kosovo secure UEFA membership, Rugova expects both to play for his team. Mehmeti did not play in Malmo, but Harbuzi scored in a 5-0 win for the hosts, who were watched by a 4,000-strong crowd of mostly exiled Kosovars.

"Physical preparation was the difference," says Rugova. "I look at our team, and the players we have, and compare them more to Croatia than Albania or Slovenia. But nothing really is happening. We've played a few games and I've done what I can. The best game was certainly Ankara."

Rugova's Kosovars sneaked into Turkey two years ago to play 2006 World Cup finalists Saudi Arabia and won 1-0, but a fixture a few days later against Oman in Switzerland was scuppered by logistical problems.

Long delay

The Kosovar football federation has approached FIFA with a request to play international friendlies but, after a long delay, the only response has been UEFA president Michel Platini's comments in Belgrade about United Nations membership.

At present Rugova spends his time holding training camps at home and abroad, where a recent camp in the Swiss city of Basle attracted 40 exiled Kosovar children. The skills he sees make him confident for the future – if there is to be one.

"I'm starting to lose a little patience," he admits. "I'm running low on enthusiasm and patience.

"I know I can do a lot with these kids but it's taking too long. I'm here for work and I can't work." ●

Outcasts...Rugova and his team before their game against Malmo in Sweden

Flying the flag...champions Internazionale set off on a lap of honour to celebrate their successful defence of the title

Mourinho's mission

Internazionale triumph once again, but success in Europe remains the ultimate goal

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

IN THE END it was only fitting that the first definitive verdict of the 2008-09 Italian season should prove to be the most important one. With Champions League, Europa League and relegation issues still undecided, reigning champions Internazionale wrapped up their fourth consecutive title – and 17th in total – on the third-last weekend of the campaign. What is more, they did it without having to kick a ball in joy or anger.

By a cruel irony it was Milan who did the trick for them, managing to lose 2-1 away to Udinese and thus eliminating any faint chance they might have had of making a last-gasp fight of it with their loathed city rivals. Inter celebrated in front of their own fans by beating Siena 3-0 the following day. With two days of the season remaining, their domestic supremacy was emphatically underlined by a league table which showed them 10 points clear of second-placed Milan, 13 clear of Juventus and 14 ahead of Fiorentina.

It's special...Mourinho

At the end of his first season in Serie A, Jose Mourinho has added yet another impressive entry to his curriculum vitae. Critics might argue that, in winning with Inter, the "Special One" was only following on in the footsteps of his predecessor, Roberto Mancini. After all, did he not inherit the strongest squad in Italian football, one whose total wage bill comes to a staggering £130million, there or thereabouts?

Maybe he did, but for a foreign

coach to win at the first time of asking in Italian football – strongest squad or not – is no easy matter. The big question, though, is can Mourinho's Inter bridge the gap between themselves and the strongest in Europe, such as Liverpool, Manchester United, Chelsea and Barcelona?

Long way to go

After all, when Massimo Moratti engaged the Portuguese maestro he did so with his eye firmly on the Champions League title. Both in the wake of Inter's Champions League elimination by Manchester United last March and in the hours after his side confirmed its title victory, Mourinho suggested the club still had some way to go, saying: "This side is very strong but it does not play that high-intensity football that you have to play in Europe.

"Partly that has to do with age, a point underlined by the number of injuries suffered by this squad.

"But this year, three of the four Champions League semi-finalists – Arsenal were the exception – were simply stronger than us. Yet, if we manage to sign those three or four players that we are chasing then we can be as strong as them."

> **"This side does not play the high-intensity football you have to play in Europe"**
>
> *Jose Mourinho*

With the exception of Argentinian striker Diego Milito and Brazilian midfielder Thiago Motta, both currently at Genoa, it is not yet clear who those reinforcements might be. Presumably, one area where Mourinho will be looking for fresh legs and a fresh mind is in defence.

In the meantime though, it is worth reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of Mourinho's first Inter side. For much of the season critics lamented the fact that, while they hoovered up the points, his team rarely played an impressive, cerebral football. For many, Inter were a side without a *gioco*, a game plan. As *La Repubblica's* astute writer Gianni Mura commented: "For sure, no one will recall Mourinho's first Inter for the quality of its football. More likely, for its efficiency and, when necessary, its good luck."

The fact is that the key players, with the exception of all-important Sweden striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, were all defenders: men like Brazil goalkeeper Julio Cesar, Argentina utility man Javier Zanetti, Colombia central defender Ivan Cordoba, Brazil full-back Maicon and Argentina's central midfielder Esteban Cambiasso. This was a side built on a rock-solid defence where at times the game plan seemed to be: defend, defend, do not concede, then knock the ball up to Ibrahimovic and he will win it for us.

This may seem an ungenerous analysis of an Inter side in which Brazil's Adriano (before he ran back to South America), young Mario Balotelli and Serb schemer Dejan Stankovic all played important attacking roles. Furthermore, in the head-to-head clashes with title rivals Milan, Juventus and Roma, Mourinho's side came out on top, winning three, drawing two and losing only once (in last autumn's derby with Milan).

If it has been a matter of "so far, so good" for Mourinho this season at Inter, the real challenge starts now. Will he be able to significantly strengthen an already strong squad? Will he persuade talisman Ibrahimovic to stay? On the "human resources" front, Mourinho's season at Inter was marked by his patient, skilful-but-firm handling of troubled stars such as Adriano and Balotelli. If he brings those skills to bear on Ibrahimovic, the Swede can be expected to stay despite his occasional public expressions of discontent.

On the transfer front, however, it is worth pointing out that Mourinho's only major market move since arriving at Inter, the acquisition and almost immediate off-loading of Portuguese attacker Ricardo Quaresma on loan to Chelsea, was hardly a huge success.

Ranieri sacked

By the standards of his peer group, however, Mourinho's season has been an outstanding success. While he and Inter prepare for a brighter future, Juventus and Milan were left to lick their wounds. After eight games without a win, Juventus finally lost patience with Claudio Ranieri and he became the first coach to be sacked by the club for 40 years. He was replaced by former club icon Ciro Ferrara.

Whoever gets the full-time job with Juve must address exactly the same problems that faced Ranieri. Does he persuade Gigi Buffon to stay on or would he prefer to sell him and use the money to buy new, young players? And when and how will Juventus get over their dependency on the ageing skills of Alessandro Del Piero and Pavel Nedved?

If things are not going well in Turin, then they are not much better at Milanello. When the club's owner, Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, told a group of Italian tourists in Egypt – he was there for a meeting with Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak – that his side would have won the title if only coach Carlo Ancelotti had not got it so badly wrong, it seemed, after eight years at Milan, that Ancelotti's time was up.

The only other definitive verdict concerned the Italian Cup, in which Lazio beat Sampdoria 6-5 in a dramatic penalty shoot-out. The Roman club probably deserved their victory if only because, in Argentinian striker Mauro Zarate, they fielded not only the best player on the night but arguably the revelation of the Italian season. ●

SEND THIS COUPON TO

UK World Soccer Subscriptions, FREEPOST CY1061, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3BR
OVERSEAS & USA World Soccer Subscriptions, PO Box 272, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, UK, RH16 3FS (please attach correct postage)

I WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE (UK ONLY)

☐ **6-monthly Direct Debit £16.80 (saving 30%)** full rate £24.05, save £14.50 a year
☐ **1 year £34.60 (save 28%)** full rate £48.10, save £13.50
☐ **2 years £67.30 (save 30%)** full rate £96.20, save £28.90

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTION

☐ USA 1 year **YOU PAY $74.55 saving 25%**
☐ USA 2 years **YOU PAY $139.20 saving 30%**
☐ Europe 1 year **YOU PAY €59.20 saving 25%**
☐ Europe 2 years **YOU PAY €110.50 saving 30%**
☐ R.O.W. 1 year **YOU PAY £62.35 saving 25%**
☐ R.O.W. 2 years **YOU PAY £115 saving 30%**

YOUR DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename:

Surname:

If you would like to receive emails from IPC Media and World Soccer containing news, special offers and product and service information and take part in our magazine research via email, please include your email below.

Email:

Address:

Postcode:

Home Tel No: (inc. area code)

Would you like to receive messages to your mobile from IPC Media and World Soccer containing news, special offers, product and service information and take part in our research? If yes, please include your mobile phone number here.

Mobile:

Year of birth: Y Y Y Y

PAYMENT DETAILS

I enclose cheque/international money order for £_____ made payable to IPC Media Ltd.

Or please debit my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex ☐ Maestro (UK only)

Maestro Only

Expiry date: / / Card Issue No /Start Date

Signature: (I am over 18)

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT

For office use only. Originator's reference - 764221

A/C no

DIRECT Debit

Name of bank:

Address:

Postcode:

Account name:

Sort code: Account no:

Please pay IPC Media Ltd direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with IPC Media Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

Signature: Date:
(I am over 18)

This offer is only open to new subscribers. The £16.80 offer is only open to new UK subscribers paying by Direct Debit. The closing date for this offer is 31st August 2009. Please allow up to eight weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue. **For enquiries and overseas rates please call +44 (0)845 123 1231, fax: +44 (0)845 675 9101, or email: ipcsubs@quadrantsubs.com.** World Soccer, published by IPC Media Ltd (IPC), will collect your personal information to process your order. World Soccer and IPC would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinion on our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to hear from us.☐ IPC may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to be contacted.☐ IPC who publish World Soccer would like to email you with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive these messages please tick here.☐

59D

GREAT SAVINGS WORLDWIDE

Live outside the UK?

SAVE UP TO 30%

USA 1 YEAR
YOU PAY $74.55, saving 25%
on the full price of $99.45

USA 2 YEARS
YOU PAY $139.20, saving 30%
on the full price of $198.90

EUROPE 1 YEAR
YOU PAY €59.20, saving 25%
on the full price of €78.95

EUROPE 2 YEARS
YOU PAY €110.50, saving 30%
on the full price of €157.90

Rest Of World 1 YEAR
YOU PAY £62.35, saving 25%
on the full price of £83.15

Rest Of World 2 YEARS
YOU PAY £115, saving 30%
on the full price of £166.30

WorldSoccer®

ONE WORLD, ONE GAME

The Direct Debit Guarantee: This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society. If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change, IPC Media Ltd. will notify you at least ten days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If an error is made by IPC Media Ltd. or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid. You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of the letter to us. Direct Debits can ONLY be paid through a Bank or Building Society. Your Direct Debit price will stay the same for one year from start date.

Order online

Order hotline

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

SAVE OVER £14

SUBSCRIBE TO WORLD SOCCER FOR AS LITTLE AS £16.80

SAVE UP TO 30%

- Join the most knowledgeable people in football
- Save money on the subscription price
- Delivered direct to your door wherever you live in the world

www.worldsoccersubs.com/iwsmf

+44(0)845 123 1231

LINES OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK, 8am-9pm UK TIME. QUOTE CODE 59D

SIX OF THE BEST LEAGUE

Tijani BELAID
SLAVIA PRAGUE

KAREL JAROLIM has had to seriously revise his initial opinion of the 21-year-old Tunisia midfielder. After arriving in the Czech capital on loan from Internazionale in July 2007, the youngster's penchant for showing displeasure when not in the starting line-up, or when being substituted, led the Slavia coach to put him in the reserves for a spell. However, the short, sharp shock worked a treat and on his return to the first-team fold, a more humble, less individualistic player emerged to become a key figure in the club's league title last year – a campaign of self-improvement that earned him a four-year contract. This season his form has been even better, confirming he has all the tools of the creative midfielder: the ability to set the tempo in the middle of the park, good vision, clever distribution, outstanding set pieces and a nose for goal. Now we know why Inter rated Belaid highly enough to pluck him from his French home-town club, Paris FC, at the age of 17 in 2004; it's just a shame he was unable to grab the opportunity, only making one Serie A appearance, followed by a disappointing temporary loan spell at PSV Eindhoven. At least he is now enjoying his Prague spring.

Lamine DIARRA
PARTIZAN BELGRADE

THE MOST popular song among Partizan fans this season was a refrain dedicated to their Senegalese striker, whose goals took the Belgrade side to the top of the table. The 25-year-old might not be one for extravagant skills – dribbling is not his forte – but he still has much going for him, namely his blistering speed, determination and perfect two-footed shooting. He is modest too, always ready to salute the work of his team-mates – especially Portuguese playmaker Almami Moreira. "He's our secret weapon," says Diarra. "He's the one who makes us play. We can link up with our eyes shut. He's given me so many chances this season I've lost count." Keen to head for Europe after some strong performances in African club competitions for Dakar-based Jeanne d'Arc, he finally had wish granted in 2005, though his destination was not the Turkish side his agent had promised. Instead he ended up at Bosnian outfit Zrinjski Mostar, then joined relegation-threatened Portuguese side Beira Mar before signing two years later for Partizan, where he made sure he will be forever adored by scoring twice against rivals Red Star in the Cup semi-finals last year.

DUDU Cearense
OLYMPIAKOS

IN HIS FIRST campaign wearing the red-and-white of Olympiakos, following a £6million switch from CSKA Moscow, the 26-year-old defensive midfielder proved to be the cornerstone of his new club's league-and-Cup double. If you want showboating, he is not your man; here is player built for efficiency, someone who does his side's dirty work with all the diligence he can muster, holding the team together with his ball-winning, covering and simple passing. He does not, however, always restrict himself to grafting in the shadows. Certainly not devoid of a sense of adventure, he can break into advanced areas with the best, and in an away win at Panionios he had the honour of scoring the goal that sealed the title for Olympiakos, their 12th crown in the last 13 seasons. A league champion in three out of the last five years – he was instrumental in CSKA claiming the Russian league in 2005 and 2006 – he is reported to be interesting the likes of Juventus and a number of Premier League sides. After Brazilian clubs Ceara and Vitoria, Kashiwa Reysol of the J.League, French side Rennes, Moscow and now Pireaus, his world tour keeps rolling on.

CHAMPIONS

Nick Bidwell selects some of Europe's most impressive title winners

MAICON
INTERNAZIONALE

DURING HIS first taste of European football at Monaco, who he joined in 2004 from Cruzeiro, the Brazilian gave few indications that he was on course to becoming one of the most able right-backs in the world. Yes, he displayed plenty of flair going forward, but what had coach Didier Deschamps tearing his hair out was his serious defensive deficiencies – such as poor positional play and a habit of losing concentration. In truth, Monaco couldn't believe their luck when Inter came along in the summer of 2006 to pay £5.8million for him. However, they must now think they were short-changed as a new and vastly-improved Maicon has developed in Italy. He is more consistent, and once he has used his speed, virtuosity and power to break free on the right, he no longer wastes his final ball. He has even sharpened up the destructive side of his game, though it has to be added that the 27-year-old's back is carefully watched by Inter's defensive midfielders. As *Nerazzurri* boss Jose Mourinho knows only too well, an Inter without a fully-fit Maicon – which has not always been the case this campaign – does not offer nearly as much counter-attacking threat.

Gerard PIQUE
BARCELONA

THE YOUNG Catalan central defender could not have wished for a more productive season than this, his first back at Barca following a four-year hiatus on the fringes of the first team at Manchester United and out on loan at Real Zaragoza. Most would have assumed that he would be a bit-part player at Camp Nou this term, but that's been far from the case. Thanks to a combination of his own undoubted ability and the club's lack of options in his position – Gabriel Milito is a long-term injury victim, while new Uruguay recruit Martin Caceres has not settled since arriving from Villarreal – the 22-year-old has become a permanent part of coach Pep Guardiola's plans, playing with so much assurance that he has forced his way into the national side as well. Certainly it was to Pique's advantage that Barcelona was not virgin ground for him. Before being snatched away by Sir Alex Ferguson after impressing at the 2004 European Under-17 Championship, Pique spent no fewer than seven years learning his craft in the Barca youth system. He knows every *Blaugrana* nook and cranny and is even the grandson of former club vice-president Amador Bernabeu.

Sebastien POCOGNOLI
AZ

WHILE GOALSCORER Mounir El Hamdaoui and central midfield regulator Demy De Zeeuw have tended to scoop most of the plaudits for AZ's championship triumph, it would be remiss to overlook the contribution of the Alkmaar side's Belgian left-back. Ever watchful when in defensive mode, dynamic on the overlap and technically sound, the 21-year-old was excellent throughout the entire campaign and, according to the rumour mill, Barcelona have earmarked him as the player they want to take over from Eric Abidal. The son of Italian immigrants to the Liege region – his father worked in a steel foundry while his mother was a teacher prior to Sebastien's birth – "Poco" admits he initially found the going tough following his switch from Genk to AZ in the summer of 2007. It took the new boy some time to become accustomed to coach Louis Van Gaal ranting at him on the training ground, but it soon had the desired effect and, over the last two seasons, he has improved beyond all measure, particularly in the precision and subtlety of his passing, the timing of his forward runs and use of his right foot, which previously only served for standing on.

SOUTH AFRICA

Dress rehearsal

Mark Gleeson on the hors d'oeuvre to South Africa's World Cup feast

SOUTH AFRICA's readiness for the 2010 World Cup comes under a stark spotlight in June's Confederations Cup. Even though the two-week tournament is being played at just four of the 10 venues being used for next year's showpiece, it is an opportunity for the country to assuage the fears of the skeptical and reassure visitors they are in for a fiesta with a difference in 12 months.

The tournament also has the potential to boost domestic interest, which is not at the fever pitch initially expected and is flagging on the back of the national side's feeble performances of late.

For FIFA, evolving the Confederations Cup from a World Cup dress rehearsal into a stand-alone event with its own competitive credibility is its greatest challenge.

A field that includes Brazil, Italy and Spain should provide much lubrication in achieving its goals, but it will also depend on how seriously the three heavyweights decide to take the tournament.

Spain coach Vicente Del Bosque has said he sees the fortnight as an ideal opportunity to initiate his side into South African conditions ahead of a World Cup for which the European champions look almost certain to qualify.

Whether Brazil and Italy are of the same conviction will become evident when they name their squads just ahead of the event but, even if they are at full strength, will their leading players treat the Confederations Cup as a post-season safari or a serious contest?

For the rest of the field, the tournament also provides a forum to achieve vastly different objectives. South Africa needs confidence and a morale booster, plus valuable international competition.

New Zealand play in October and November in World Cup qualifying play-offs, so a minimum of three competitive

Ticket to ride...South African fans, above and left, get in the mood to welcome the Confederations Cup

UTH AFRICA
WELCOME
CONFEDE
RAT IONS
CUP
2009
CitiStriker
Betting WORLD
Discipline is the answer
MDOKIES
16V
16V MDOKIES 16V
MDOKIES
BAFANA
BAFANA
AFRICA'S TIME
HAS COME
16V
2010

Coca-Cola Park, Johannesburg

Free State Stadium, Bloemfontein

games in South Africa, plus three friendlies in preparation, is a rare luxury for a side light on regular international fixtures.

The USA can experiment with a few combinations, given they are on course for World Cup qualification, but Egypt urgently need to find some new talent if they are to make the 2010 tournament.

Iraq, already out of the running for the World Cup, qualified for the Confederations Cup after their fairy-tale triumph at the last Asian Cup but have made many changes since in a typical overreaction to disappointing results.

The eight competitors make up a disparate field, but the possibility of some ill-matched contests have been limited by a draw that has Iraq and New Zealand paired in the same group.

As World Cup hosts, South Africa has had a tough job in spinning its potential in an attempt to persuade the doubters. After all, this is a country that has had to deal with Afro-pessimism and a perception of incompetence carried by a continent whose coup d'etats, famines and conflicts are often the only news to which the rest of the world is exposed.

Added to this is a high rate of violent crime which creates a perception of anarchy.

Impressive stadia

Accentuating the country's many positives has been poorly done by an inept public relations department, but the reality is the 2010 World Cup is well on course, with impressive stadia and massive infrastructure upgrades fast nearing completion.

As a tourist destination, South Africa has grown rapidly since its days of cultural, economic and sporting isolation and it now draws millions of visitors, rapidly growing an industry that should cope comfortably with an estimated 500,000 visitors next year.

Here we go again... Brazil and Italy are set to renew rivalries at Loftus Versfeld

The four venues to be used in the Confederations Cup are all at altitude, which in the case of Johannesburg is at 1,800metres above sea level and Bloemfontein 1,300m, and will impact on those sides who have not prepared themselves to play in the thinner air. It will be brisk, sometimes moderately cold at night, which are possibly the ideal conditions for football.

Coca-Cola Park (formerly known as Ellis Park), the venue for rugby union's World Cup Final in 1995, will host the opening game as well as the Final. The Johannesburg venue has had some minor renovations, but the newly laid pitch has come in for some heavy criticism.

Loftus Versfeld, a 40-minute ride down the motorway in Pretoria, has a

Our turn...South Africa get a chance to lift some silverware after winning the Nelson Mandela Challenge

Loftus Versfeld, Pretoria

Royal Bafokeng Stadium, Rustenburg

perfect pitch and is also a famous old rugby venue that has been upgraded for the Confederations Cup and next year's World Cup.

Bloemfontein's Free State Stadium has had more extensive renovation work carried out but has also been finished in good time.

These three venues are also being used for the Lions rugby tour, which is being held at the same time as the Confederations Cup, thereby forging a remarkably cordial relationship between the two sports which tug at the various extremes of South African society.

The fourth Confederations Cup venue is the Royal Bafokeng Stadium, which recently extended its capacity to beyond 40,000 and is owned by the Bafokeng people, whose land sits above lucrative platinum deposits. It is on the outskirts of the provincial town of Rustenburg, a two-hour car ride north west of Johannesburg.

The Bafokeng have invested their spoils wisely and have an impressive stadium, albeit in a poor area on the approach road to the Sun City resort, which was re-opened in March when South Africa scored a last-minute winner to beat Norway 2-1 in the Nelson Mandela Challenge match.

A fifth venue had been originally scheduled but Port Elizabeth's Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium was deleted from the list in July last year because it was feared that construction work would not be ready in time. With the 2010 organising committee unable to furnish any concrete guarantees, FIFA was not prepared to gamble on including the stadium. The city council was bemused and angry but all its protestations fell on deaf ears.

As it turned out, Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium was completed in time but now, instead of hosting Confederations Cup matches, this purpose-built football ground will now be inaugurated with a Lions tour match – just one of the many delicious ironies in a country where the apartheid legacy in sport is still reflected in infrastructure.

However, that will all have been balanced by next year with impressive footballing cathedrals going up in Cape Town, Durban and at Soccer City in Johannesburg, which is to be the centrepiece of the World Cup.

Until then, the Confederations Cup is likely to be smothered in a tight, potentially suffocating security blanket, given the fears that a criminal incident will produce headlines of the wrong kind worldwide.

South Africa might have won the first battle of confidence by seeing off the repeated question of whether it will actually get to stage the 2010 event, but the country must still prove it is a worthy host.

The Confederations Cup will be a keenly watched test. ●

"The event is likely to be smothered in a tight, potentially suffocating security blanket"

FIXTURES

GROUP A

June 14
Iraq v South Africa, Coca-Cola Park
New Zealand v Spain, Royal Bafokeng Stadium

June 17
Iraq v Spain, Free State Stadium
New Zealand v South Africa, Royal Bafokeng Stadium

June 20
Iraq v New Zealand, Coca-Cola Park
South Africa v Spain, Free State Stadium

GROUP B

June 15
Brazil v Egypt, Free State Stadium
Italy v USA, Loftus Versfeld Stadium

June 18
Brazil v USA, Loftus Versfeld Stadium
Egypt v Italy, Coca-Cola Park

June 21
Brazil v Italy, Loftus Versfeld Stadium
Egypt v USA, Royal Bafokeng Stadium

SEMI-FINALS

June 24
Group A winner v Group B runner-up, Free State Stadium

June 25
Group A runner-up v Group B winner, Coca-Cola Park

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF

June 28
Royal Bafokeng Stadium

FINAL

June 28
Coca-Cola Park

World Cup vision...how Coca-Cola Park should look for 2010

Shut out...Lucas Thwala (left) and Lance Davids try to keep Cristiano Ronaldo at bay

All fall down...Iraq's defence in action in a build-up friendly against South Korea

SOUTH AFRICA

WITH JUST 12 months to go before the World Cup, South Africa continue to offer little hope that they might yet be able to prove a competitive force when they host 2010's tournament.

However, they have a chance at the Confederations Cup to reverse the conviction that they could become the first home side to fail to make the knockout stages at a World Cup finals.

South Africa have been handed a fortunate draw, which could be cynically suggested was craftily engineered by all the clauses and caveats that FIFA put in place before pulling the pairings out of the pots.

Coach Joel Santana has taken a massive gamble in omitting Benni McCarthy

The hosts open against Iraq, play New Zealand next and could conceivably have accumulated six points, and a semi-final place, before their final group match against Spain.

That would be enough to hand a major morale boost to the side and their supporters as well as giving the build-up to 2010 a big lift.

But the team have done little to assuage fears they will not be competitive. Since failure to make it past the first round of the World Cup qualifiers – in which South Africa were participating solely in search of a place at the 2010 African Nations Cup finals – preparation has now switched to a diet of testing, non-African opposition.

Bafana Bafana lost at home to Chile in February and turned in a limp performance against a mainly second-string Portugal at the end of March. Sandwiched between was a 2-1 win over Norway, but admittedly the heat and altitude played a major part in overcoming the Scandinavian visitors.

Coach Joel Santana has taken a massive gamble by omitting Benni McCarthy from the squad. McCarthy has evolved as South Africa's "public enemy No1" over recent years, pilloried for his laissez-faire attitude to the national team. It is doubtful he is too bothered but his absence leaves the attack effectively toothless.

It is also places much more responsibility on the shoulders of Teko Modise and Siphiwe Tshabalala, home-based players with plenty of potential but far too inconsistent to carry the team beyond the opening two matches.

Elrio Van Heerden could reaffirm his potential, but the Belgium-based midfielder has battled with injury since emerging from the 2008 Nations Cup finals as South Africa's best player. Santana has hardly used him since he took over just over a year ago.

In goal, there are question marks over the youthful Itumeleng Khune, while captain Aaron Mokoena has more than 80 caps but is increasingly a liability in defence where competition for places is most intense.

Mark Gleeson

COACH
JOEL SANTANA
Recommended by predecessor Carlos Alberto Parreira but failure here could see him on his way.

KEY PLAYER
TEKO MODISE
Late developer but unlikely to get high-profile move his skills demand.

IRAQ

HE MAY have taken a record number of teams to the World Cup finals but Iraq coach Bora Milutinovic must look at his Confederations Cup opponents with a slight hint of envy and disappointment as his current side have long since been ruled out of South Africa 2010.

Failure to qualify was confirmed in a bitter 1-0 loss to Qatar last year. Although it later emerged that Qatar had fielded an ineligible player – which would normally have led to them having to forfeit the match – FIFA refused to overturn the result because Iraq had filed their claim too late. It was a fittingly anarchic end to a campaign that had started with so much promise following the team's shock Asian Cup win in 2007.

War, assassinations, kidnap attempts, homelessness: all of these had conspired, and failed, to thwart Iraq, and the Lions of Mesopotamia firmly believed that this World Cup was to be their tournament. Instead their hopes were ended in Sepp Blatter's bureaucratic mincer.

It should, however, be pointed out that the same group of talented players that triumphed in 2007 failed miserably to perform in the qualifiers, with insipid "home" games – which were played in Dubai – against the likes of China and Qatar.

Suddenly a young team looked like a flash in the pan, its stars wilting in the glow of that famous evening in Jakarta.

Nashat Akram, the team's pivotal playmaker, has struggled to reclaim the form that saw interest from Manchester City, although he will play for Twente in Holland next season after signing on a free transfer from Qatar's Al Gharafa. Younis Mahmoud, the fearsome, bullish striker who scored the winning goal in Jakarta, has stayed with Gharafa in Qatar despite interest from European leagues.

One player, though, has thrived: Hawar Mulla Mohammed. A quick-breaking midfielder, who is equally at home in the lone striker role, he signed for Cypriot champions Anorthosis last summer.

There has been little to cheer of late. Iraq came bottom of their Gulf Cup group in January, an experimental side losing 4-0 to Bahrain, which cost returning messiah Jorvan Vieira – the Brazilian who famously won the Asian Cup – his job.

Yet there are signs of hope. Iraq find themselves in a group against a ring-rusty New Zealand and a poor South Africa. With Milutinovic at the helm, a motivated Iraq stand a good chance of making the second round against either Brazil or Italy – a game that would bring Baghdad, and much of the Arab world, to a standstill.

James Montague

A second-round tie with Brazil or Italy would bring Baghdad to a standstill

COACH
BORA MILUTINOVIC
Much-travelled veteran Serb who is in charge of his eighth national team.

KEY PLAYER
HAWAR MULLA MOHAMMED
First Iraqi to play, and score, in UEFA Champions League.

Striking hope...Shane Smeltz gets the better of two New Caledonia defenders

Heading to South Africa...Del Bosque has found a place for Liverpool's Xabi Alonso

NEW ZEALAND

IT IS difficult to argue against the widespread belief that New Zealand will only be at the Confederations Cup to make up the numbers.

As standard bearers for Oceania, they line up alongside Iraq, South Africa and Spain having easily established supremacy over the Pacific islands minnows with whom they share occupancy of world football's least regarded region.

The principal reason for believing the All Whites will fare poorly is a lack of experience at international level. Due to the always financially stretched federation's inability to entice worthwhile opposition Down Under, and their own lack of appeal as an opponent, they did not play any friendlies for 22 months before a 3-1 loss to Thailand in Bangkok in March. During that period, New Zealand were confined to matches in their own backyard against Fiji, New Caledonia and Vanuatu.

Nor can the squad, assembled from four continents, claim a wealth of experience in the globe's better club competitions.

Captain Ryan Nelsen, the side's most accomplished player, will miss the tournament after tearing a calf muscle playing for Blackburn Rovers in the Premier League. And apart from injury-prone striker Chris Killen, who is on Celtic's books, the rest of the European-based contingent are attached to unheralded clubs from Finland, Scotland and Greece.

However, midfielder Chris James could be capable of achieving a better environment. A highly promising youth player at Fulham, he was beset by injuries and is now rebuilding his career with Tampere United.

Of the North American residents, San Jose Earthquakes midfielder Simon Elliott, who turns 35 four days before the tournament commences,

Smeltz scored two fine goals against Wales and has never looked back

has the best credentials, yet struggled during his 16 months with Fulham.

Australia's A-League provides the squad's backbone, with current Golden Boot holder Shane Smeltz the cream of this particular crop. Two years ago, Smeltz seemed to be on the scrap heap having just been released by Halifax. But he scored two fine goals in a 2-2 draw with Wales and has never looked back.

That battling draw at Wrexham gives New Zealand cause for hope, as do all the other unexpected draws and wins against middle-ranking nations occasionally produced over the years.

While getting anything from Spain would be a fairy tale it is conceivable the Kiwis can emerge from the Iraq and South Africa games with a point or more.

Certainly, if the team can improve their Confederations Cup record of six games and six defeats, the campaign will be adjudged a success.

Paul Moon

COACH
RICKI HERBERT
The former central defender is first New Zealander to take charge of the national team.

KEY PLAYER
CHRIS WOOD
Highly-rated teen who made his Premier League debut for West Bromwich in April.

SPAIN

SORRY, BUT Vicente Del Bosque isn't convincing anyone. Day after day, the message is the same: would everybody, please, just calm down. But, day after day, the response is the same – no one is taking the slightest bit of notice.

"We need to make people forget all this stuff about being the best team in the world," says the Spain coach. "People say we're going to win the World Cup. But we're not even there yet!"

Yet, qualification aside, Del Bosque seems to have everything else under control. He has already been to South Africa to visit the team's hotel and returned to Spain beaming. He has set up the pre-tournament training camp

It's no wonder Del Bosque is struggling to keep the country's expectations in check

in Madrid and delayed naming his squad until both the English and Spanish league seasons are over. And he has spoken to his players – in particular the injured Santi Cazorla of Villarreal who he is keen to involve.

The one thing he has not been able to do is change the mood surrounding the squad. Where pessimism once won out, boundless optimism has taken over. And the winners of Euro 2008 are showing no sign of letting up.

Del Bosque has made a handful of changes, bringing wingers into his squad, and Fernando Llorente, a target man in a team that had none. He has also called up Llorente's Athletic Bilbao team-mate Andoni Iraola, found a place for Liverpool's Xabi Alonso, and even experimented with a solitary striker rather than two up front.

But one thing that does not change are the results. With a winning mindset installed by Euro 2008, the football has continued to be hugely impressive, the commitment to Spain's passing game maintained. Under Del Bosque they have won six out of six in qualifying, nine out of nine in total. They have also scored 21 goals and conceded just two.

But of course it goes back further than that. Spain are unbeaten since that shock reverse against Northern Ireland almost three years ago. In total, they have now gone 31 games without a defeat to equal the national record, held by Javier Clemente's side. Better still, while Clemente's side won 21 and drew 10, the current team have won 28 of those 31 and drawn just three (one of which they then won on penalties, against Italy). They have scored 59 goals and conceded just 11.

It's no wonder Spain are favourites to win in South Africa – not just at the Confederations Cup but at next year's World Cup too. It's no wonder that they are No1 in the FIFA rankings. And, with a European Championship trophy under their arm for the first time in 44 years, it's certainly no wonder that Del Bosque is struggling to keep his country's expectations in check.

Sid Lowe

COACH
VICENTE DEL BOSQUE
Ex-Real Madrid boss succeeded Luis Aragones last summer.

KEY PLAYER
FERNANDO TORRES
Liverpool striker who scored the winning goal in the Euro 2008 Final.

Dropped...Ronaldinho has got plenty to do to make South Africa 2010

Hot head...Zaki loses control against Zambia

BRAZIL

EIGHT YEARS ago, Brazil coach Emerson Leao was informed by his employers that the Confederations Cup would not be taken seriously. But after his experimental squad performed badly at the tournament, he was sacked, Luiz Felipe Scolari took charge and the team went on to World Cup glory the following year.

Current incumbent Dunga is taking no such chances. Though he has made it very clear World Cup qualification is his immediate priority, this year's Confederations Cup should prove a good reconnaissance experience and he has named a strong squad.

Left-back is one of the few places in Dunga's starting line-up up for grabs

There is, however, one big-name absentee: Ronaldinho.

Despite Dunga's insistence that the one-time world's best is very much in his plans, leaving him out now is a warning that unless he gets in shape he will also miss out on next year's finals.

His place has gone to Cruzeiro's impressive Benfica-bound box-to-box midfielder Ramires, and Marcelo of Real Madrid has also been dropped, with left-backs Kleber of Internacional, who has been in the squad for a while, and Andre Santos of Corinthians set to challenge him for one of the few places in Dunga's starting line-up that looks to still be up for grabs.

In the absence of injured keeper Doni, Gremio's solid and serious Victor wins a deserved first call-up, while there is a surprise recall for Heurelho Gomes of Tottenham Hotspur.

Another home-based player who gets his chance is Nilmar of Internacional who, temporarily at least, fills the void left by striker Adriano.

There had been speculation that Ronaldo – who, though still looking heavy, has scored some excellent goals and showed flashes of his extraordinary talent with Corinthians – might get the nod, but the player himself was not too keen. Selection would have taken him out of the Brazilian Cup, his club's immediate priority, and he talked away any chance of an instant recall by describing Ricardo Teixeira, the president of the football association, as "two-faced".

Having a full month to work with his players should help Dunga to improve the team's collective play, though any conclusions drawn from the Confederations Cup can be misleading.

Four years ago Brazil effectively committed themselves to the "magic quartet" formation after tearing apart an under-strength and exhausted Argentina in the Final. A year later, at the 2006 World Cup, they looked top heavy, unbalanced and unconvincing.

Dunga will hope to put the experience gained in South Africa this year to more productive use.

Tim Vickery

COACH
DUNGA
Former midfield general who is finding out that being Brazil boss is like sitting in a coconut shy.

KEY PLAYER
KAKA
Leader of the attack who, at his best, makes the game look simple.

EGYPT

THE PHARAOHS' position as the pre-eminent team in African football could be coming to an end as the ageing "golden generation" starts to find the competition at home becoming increasingly tougher.

Egypt have won back-to-back African Nations Cup tournaments – their success in Ghana last year was much more impressive and emphatic than their victory at home in 2006 – but, with key components of the team looking jaded and exhausted, the side is at a crossroads.

The game against Zambia in Cairo at the beginning of the final phase of the World Cup qualifiers proved as much and the 1-1 draw was a surprising setback for one of the favourites in the preliminary competition.

The situation was then exacerbated by a war of words between strikers Mido and Amr Zaki, who are team-mates at Wigan but evidently have little time for one another. Mido, who has always been a combustive entity, was thrown out of the national set-up in 2006 for arguing with the coach, Hassan Shehata, and Zaki – who is no angel himself, just ask Wigan manager Steve Bruce – accused him of another outburst against Shehata after he started the Zambia game on the bench.

Shehata made sure there will be no such trouble during the Confederations Cup by omitting Mido. "He was excluded due to a tactical point of view," he explained.

The rest of Shehata's squad draws heavily from Cairo giants Al Ahly.

The likes of Ahmed Hassan, Mohamed Aboutraika and Wael Gomaa are part of a club side that has dominated African football for the last five years, but that bubble may have burst – with Aboutraika in particular suffering a litany of niggling injuries after years of strenuous competition.

Meanwhile, Hassan has struggled on his return to Egypt from Anderlecht in Belgium and there is no obvious successor to keeper Essam Al Hadary, who has seen better days.

It could be argued there is no substitute for experience, but the Confederations Cup will go a long way towards determining whether Egypt's recent slump marks the end of an era. Despite a consistent level of success in continental competition, Egypt have not made it to the World Cup finals since 1990, when they acquitted themselves adequately in a group containing England, Republic of Ireland and Holland.

World Cup qualification remains something of a Holy Grail for the Pharaohs, who see the Confederations Cup as a chance for some quality warm-up games ahead of the final phase of the 2010 preliminaries.

Mark Gleeson

With key players looking jaded and exhausted, Egypt are at a crossroads

COACH
HASSAN SHEHATA
Led The Pharaohs to African Nations Cup titles in 2006 and 2008.

KEY PLAYER
MOHAMED ABOUTRAIKA
Should have been African Footballer of the Year for his exploits in 2008.

Second chance...off after three minutes in Bari, Lippi may want another look at Pazzini

In safe hands...keeper Howard has been in great form this season

ITALY

NATIONAL COACH Marcello Lippi has made no secret of the importance that he attaches to this tournament, seeing it not only as a valuable chance to familiarise his players with South Africa but also the perfect opportunity to take a look at a number of players in a competitive context.

Lest anyone had any doubts about the difficulties facing the World Cup holders when they return next summer, Italy were given a wake-up call in the 2-0 defeat by Dunga's Brazil in a February friendly at the Emirates Stadium in London. After that, they beat Montenegro 2-0 in a World Cup qualifier in Podgorica before being held to a 1-1 draw by the Giovanni Trapattoni-coached Republic of Ireland in Bari in another qualifier.

That latter game served as an emphatic reminder that Lippi still has some way to go to building a side strong enough to defend the trophy that was won in Germany in 2006. Italy were greatly handicapped by the sending-off of striker Giampaolo Pazzini after only three minutes and they struggled for long periods in a game in which Trapattoni, in the words of *Gazzetta Dello Sport*, was "the outstanding protagonist of the night".

After a game against Ireland in which Italy managed only one shot on goal, Lippi is only too aware that he needs more power, pace and incision up front – which means there may be space for players such as Lazio's tricky little winger Pasquale Foggia and Chievo striker Sergio Pelliser in South Africa, this summer and next.

While World Cup winners Gianluigi Buffon, Gianluca Zambrotta, Fabio Cannavaro, Fabio Grosso, Daniele De Rossi, Andrea Pirlo and Luca Toni all remain key elements, Lippi will doubtless want to take a further look at Matteo Brighi (Roma), Riccardo Montolivo (Fiorentina) and Giuseppe Rossi (Villarreal).

Lippi is unlikely to reject the opportunity to look at some newcomers

He has so far named 13 players who will definitely be at the Confederations Cup, and these will be bolstered by a further 10 names from the 21-man squad selected for the friendly with Northern Ireland in Pisa.

Even though Lippi has said he will pick his strongest squad for South Africa, he might be keen to look at newcomers such as keeper Federico Marchetti (Cagliari), defenders Davide Santon (Inter), Andrea Esposito (Leece) and Mattia Cassani (Palermo), midfielder Daniele Galloppa (Siena), and Catania duo Marco Biagianti and Giuseppe Mascara.

Lippi is, however, sure about one thing – he does not want to win the tournament, saying: "Whoever wins the Confederations Cup never goes on to win the World Cup, so I don't know how much people want to win it really."

Paddy Agnew

COACH
MARCELLO LIPPI
Has his eye on a bigger prize in South Africa next year.

KEY PLAYER
GIANLUIGI BUFFON
At 31 years of age, the Juventus keeper is still one of the best in the world.

USA

FOR COACH Bob Bradley the Confederations Cup presents a "can't lose" proposition – if only because expectations will not be high, given the strength of his side's group.

The USA have played a total of 20 games against Brazil, Egypt and Italy, and won just once – against Brazil.

Bradley can only try to improve on the USA's last Confederations Cup appearance, in 2003, when they were quickly eliminated after losing to Brazil and Turkey, but even if they fail to advance from a tough group there is still little likelihood of criticism.

This is a summer that sees plenty of action for the USA, with five World Cup qualifiers and the Gold Cup, but one thing is certain: the Confederations Cup will not be taken lightly. Bradley is likely to field his strongest team, which raises hopes for an upset as there is a feeling that Brazil and Italy will both field below-strength sides.

There is hope for an upset if Brazil or Italy field below-strength teams

With their current placing of 15th in FIFA's world rankings, the USA have proved that they belong among the world's top powers. Bradley now has a large pool of players to draw from, many of them playing in Europe, and in his first year as national coach he called up 61 players, half of whom had experience of European football.

It is likely that the Confederations Cup squad will be made up mostly of players from Europe.

As usual, goalkeeping is the strong point, with Tim Howard (Everton) and Brad Guzan (Aston Villa). Defenders include Oguchi Onyewu (Standard Liege), Carlos Bocanegra (Rennes), Steve Cherundolo (Hannover) and Heath Pearce (Hansa Rostock).

In midfield, there is the coach's son, Michael Bradley (Borussia Monchengladbach), plus DaMarcus Beasley and Maurice Edu (Rangers), with Clint Dempsey and Eddie Johnson (Fulham) and Jozy Altidore (Villarreal) are up front.

A rather sad question mark, however, still hovers over Freddy Adu, now 20 years old, who has seen little playing time at Monaco this year.

MLS regulars Landon Donovan (Los Angeles Galaxy), Pablo Mastroeni (Colorado Rapids) and Brian Ching (Houston Dynamo) are all likely to feature as well.

Asked for his view of the team, former USA coach Bora Milutinovic (now in charge of Iraq), commented: "Perhaps they have no outstanding stars, but they are a good team, a very well-organised team."

But while the USA maybe defensively sound, well-organised, difficult to beat, strong in the air and good at set plays, they have yet to impress as a team that can dominate with stylish, coherent, football.

Paul Gardner

COACH
BOB BRADLEY
Former Under-23 coach who led the full side to 2007 Gold Cup victory.

KEY PLAYER
LANDON DONOVAN
Now back in MLS after a disappointing loan spell at Bayern Munich.

FACE TO FACE

Interviews with football's biggest names

Hiddink

"I have a mutual commitment with the Russian team ...even though I loved working at Chelsea, I cannot let these guys down"

Club and **country**

He took Chelsea to the FA Cup Final and the Champions League semis, but now Guus Hiddink wants to concentrate on the World Cup

IT IS CLEAR that the players and supporters at Chelsea would have liked you to remain at the club. Was there ever any chance of you combining the job of Premier League manager with that of Russia's national coach?
I enjoyed working with the squad at Chelsea every day, but I know with all my heart that I have a commitment to Russia as well. Two years ago we started building up to the European Championship in Austria and Switzerland; building a team and improving the organisation around the team. Now we have started the qualification process for South Africa – which isn't going to be easy – I have a mutual commitment with the Russian team and I have challenged them to qualify. It would not be fair to leave them. Even though I loved working at Chelsea, I cannot let these guys down. I don't like that and I won't do it.

But you've had two jobs at the same time before and it worked then...
But that was different, that was with PSV and Australia. Australia had been asking me for many years to help them qualify for the World Cup and eventually I agreed, but I said I would only do it if I could keep my full-time job with PSV. In preparation for the play-off game with Uruguay the Australia squad even came to Eindhoven to prepare so that I could keep my attention on the main job at PSV. The situation now is a little bit different. When we looked at Russia's schedule, from February to the end of May, there was just the Liechtenstein and Azerbaijan games before Finland in June, so that made things easier.

Were you tempted to stay for another go at the Champions League?
Yes I was tempted but, as I said before, I have this commitment to the Russian players. We have started something together and if they are successful I want to be there with them. If we don't qualify, I also want to be with them. We are in this until the end.

You have a great record as a coach, but was it hard for you to sell yourself to the Chelsea players, knowing that they have had strong characters like Jose Mourinho and have won a lot of titles? Did you feel more pressure on yourself because of that?
No I don't feel pressure. I feel the tension, but that gives me energy. The players had won titles but I was curious to see if they had the desire to play and win. The whole team reacted and showed desire.

What did you do to certain players to raise their level of performance? Didier Drogba was struggling before you arrived, Florent Malouda and Salomon Kalou improved. How do you get the best out of players?
Didier had a difficult time in the first half of the season, but he reacted in training. I try to judge players, find what they are capable of, what their ability is. I think everyone can go a little bit further than sometimes they think they can. I look for the boundaries of a player's performance. You have to create an atmosphere in which they can perform and we worked hard with Drogba, as we did with every player. He was eager to play, not because of me, but because he was motivated to show his ability.

Your relationship with the club's owner, Roman Abramovich, made it possible for you to work at Chelsea and Russia. Could he have helped you to stay next season?
This special relationship, which is one of the main reasons I did what I was asked to do at Chelsea, is a relationship between Roman Abramovich, the Russian football federation and Chelsea. That was the only reason I could do both jobs. I could not go to another club and be the manager of the Russian national team as well.

You've worked all over the world. What job have you enjoyed most?
I've been in this profession a long time now, but I still enjoy coming to the training ground every day, working with young players and helping them with their problems. I had some good times in Spain, but even at one or two clubs where things were more difficult I still enjoyed being there and working there, so I have no preference whatsoever.

In your opinion, is the Premier League the best in the world?
It is the best in the world, as was shown by the Champions League semi-finals having three English teams again. I think the concept is very good in England. Players like to play in England, which makes the league strong. It's well organised, players have good contracts and it's lovely to play in an English environment. The stadiums in England are very alive, which makes it special. When the clubs can sign the best players then, yes, automatically it will be the best league.

Fabio Capello has complained there aren't enough English players in the Premier League. In light of that, how do you think he has done as England manager?
He has definitely revived the English team. I talk with John Terry, Frank Lampard, Ashley Cole, and they tell me how much they enjoy being in the national team, playing for England with a lot of pride. But the first remark is also true. When I've been in charge of a national team I love to have home-grown players playing for the country's big clubs. I think in the future we will see more and more home-grown players coming up through the big clubs.

How do you think Capello has been able to revive the team?
He knows football. He's one of the most successful coaches in the world and he gets to know his players. I think he's very strict and tells his players what he expects from them, but basically he enjoys the game and he allows his players to enjoy the game within a certain discipline.

Do you think it's difficult to keep motivating players at the top clubs because of the big salaries, the big egos and the big lifestyle?
No it's not difficult, I think there is a natural selection. If a player is well paid by a club but is not motivated then he will slip away. If a manager has to motivate players, and they don't have their own motivation and desire, then it's wrong. When you sign players it's no good just looking at how someone plays. As a manager you have to know also more about his personality, about his character, about his desire. The normal desire must be there. If it's not, don't sign them. ●

Interview by Pedro Pinto

FACE TO FACE

Interviews with football's biggest names

Santana

"Football life, for me, is like family life. My players are my children. That is how I treat them"

Family man

The Brazilian has the toughest job in football – coaching World Cup hosts South Africa

HE DID not apply for the job of South Africa coach. Rather, Joel Santana, was brought in, promoted even, in an emergency last year after Carlos Alberto Parreira had to step down for family reasons. Since then, the 60-year-old Brazilian has taken over his countryman's plans and team, survived elimination from the qualifying rounds of the African Nations Cup and built a winning team ahead of the Confederations Cup.

In organisational terms, the tournament is a warm-up for the World Cup finals next year; for Santana, however, it is a point of no return.

South Africa have been drawn in the weaker of the first-round groups, alongside Iraq, New Zealand and Spain. If they fail to finish at least second, and thus quality for the semi-finals, it will be crisis time for the man who is known to his players as "Papa Joel" because of his fatherly attitude.

What is your relationship like with your players? Some coaches try to be close to their players, others prefer to cut themselves off so that they achieve results almost by intimidation. What is your style and philosophy?
Football, in the end, is down to players. The coach can contribute a lot but, once the kick-off has happened, the players are on their own out there. They have to make decisions instantly on any given situation. You try to prepare them for all the eventualities of a game but they make the decisions. A coach can only sit on the bench. Or shout from the touchline...but that is only a reaction to the tension.

That is a general philosophy, but how difficult did you find it to adjust to South Africa and football there?
When I came here it was difficult. I didn't know the players, I didn't know the country, and I didn't know the people and their way of life. That is a big challenge because the coach has to understand the players and they have to understand me. I have to develop confidence in what they can do, but they must also learn to trust the coach.

So, during a game, how do you get your messages across?
Football life, for me, is like family life. My players are like my children. That is how I treat them. If a player does something good then I am happy and he knows it. But if a player does something wrong then, like my children, I only need to look at him in a certain way and he gets the message! But we are all members of the same family and we know what our life and responsibilities entail. We have to do well in the Confederations Cup and then in the World Cup beyond that. We can't escape it. It is approaching very fast.

So what are you trying to teach the players at this stage of your project?
I want to develop confidence, so I like us to play a lot of matches because the more matches you play then the more matches you will win. Winning becomes a habit, and winning a lot of games generates confidence, which helps you win more games. It's a circle effect. Just like in the game against Cameroon; I had the confidence to bring Bernard Parker into the team in the second half and he responded to that gesture of confidence by scoring our third goal. I had faith in him so he was able to repay it.

Which coaches taught you this "fatherly" approach to your players?
One was Carlos Alberto Parreira, who is a top, top coach. The other, going back a long way, was Elba De Padua Lima [known as Tim, who played for Brazil in the 1938 World Cup]. He was one of the most technically aware coaches I ever met. Players need to know that the coach understands football out on the pitch, not just in press conferences.

Playing for the host country means a level of expectation none of your players will have experienced before, even the ones who play their football in Europe. How will they cope?
This comes back to the issue of confidence. But, also, you need to understand that players draw a great deal of self-respect from the very fact that, firstly, they have been considered good enough to play for their country and from the fact that, secondly, the pride which that gives them. The sort of pride so they look presentable when they are away from the stadium and the training ground. It's like extra adrenalin. The work we are doing now is to help them feel the freedom to play their game without worrying about mistakes; because we are human beings, we all make mistakes. They have to remember they are playing a team game; they are playing for their country, not for themselves. Everyone is with them. Millions of people are kicking the ball with them and for them.

Have you any special ideas to prepare for the level of competition you'll meet at the Confederations Cup and the World Cup?
Some of our players do not play at a high enough level, that is true, because they play their football here in South Africa. So it's important that we get international games against big teams such as England, Germany, Holland, Italy, Spain and so on. Then, on the big day, the players will know exactly what level they have to reach. Also, we are building team spirit, so you always make sure you have players who love the game. You make sure you know which players are best to share a room together, who likes a big breakfast and who likes none. My players call me "Papa Joel" because I see them as my children. And, as with children, discipline and respect are essential mutual qualities.

What is your team's potential?
Difficult to say, at this stage. After the Confederations Cup I will have a much better idea of what needs to be done for us to be in the best shape possible for the World Cup and how we need to improve. We have identified most of our players but that's not to say others will not be brought in – as long as they can adapt to the spirit of harmony in the squad. Football is team game; a good individual player can win one game but he cannot win a tournament.

Do you have any players in your squad who you would consider key to your success?
None. It's a group of players, a squad, and you cannot place one above another. It would be an injustice to build around one or two players, that would endanger team spirit. Team spirit is not the key to success but a lack of team spirit is certainly the key to failure. ●

Interview by Keir Radnedge

TALENT SCOUT

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

CZECH REPUBLIC

Tomas NECID

Making his mark in Moscow

AT A TIME when the Czech national team is in the doldrums – falling at the first hurdle of Euro 2008 and struggling to make headway in the World Cup 2010 qualifiers – one of the few rays of hope is the emergence the 19-year-old CSKA Moscow striker who has admirers all over Europe and scored on his international debut last autumn, albeit against the less-than-awe-inspiring San Marino.

His agent may be David Nehoda – the son of Zdenek Nehoda, who was a prominent member of the Czechoslovakia side that bagged the European title back in 1976 – but the teenager has a long way to go to match Nehoda senior's 31 international goals in 90 games. However, given the youngster's ability, scope for improvement and youthfulness, perhaps it's not such a daunting benchmark after all – as is proved by a queue of potential suitors such as Arsenal, Bayern Munich and Real Madrid, who are not exactly in the habit of swooning over mediocrity.

Facially a dead ringer for the ex-Manchester United and Norway front man Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, Necid has all the qualities of a marquee player. He has the height – not to mention the heading ability and presence that come with it – ball control, mobility, altruism and goalscoring touch.

UEFA youth competitions have been a particularly rich seam for him to mine over the past few years. At the 2006 European Under-17 championship he was the tournament's joint-top scorer, along with Bojan Krkic of Spain and Germany's Manuel Fischer, with five goals. Two years later he took the Golden Boot at the Under-19 finals, this time notching four goals in four games.

Born in Prague, he began his footballing odyssey aged five with junior club Sokol Stodulky before joining the schoolboy ranks of local giants Slavia, where he broke into the first team shortly after his 17th birthday. Intent on giving him a diet of regular action as well as a few hard knocks, Slavia sent him on loan to top-flight relegation candidates Jablonec. Although there for only half of the 2007-08 season, his five goals were worth their weight in gold as Jablonec hauled themselves out of trouble.

In the summer of 2008, not long after his return to Slavia, his career took another momentous turn. CSKA, who had been trailing him for three long years, finally clinched a £5million deal to take him to Moscow. With the Russian club agreeing to loan him back to Slavia for the last four months of the year, he had the chance for a proper goodbye: a farewell tour that featured 11 goals in 16 games. He might not have been around when Slavia celebrated this year's Czech crown, but he was certainly responsible for a large chunk of the down payment on that success.

His first competitive game for CSKA, the Russian Supercup encounter with Rubin Kazan in March 2009, also saw him in a favourable light. Coming on as a second-half sub, he won over the fans with an extra-time winner.

"As a child my dream was always to sign for a big club and now it's happened to me," he says. "CSKA are top European club. They are a very strong unit and so ambitious. They buy many good foreign players. This is the right step in my career."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club CSKA Moscow (Rus)
Country Czech Republic
Born August 13, 1989, in Prague
Previous clubs Sokol Stodulky, Slavia Prague, Jablonec (loan), Slavia Prague
International debut November 2008 v San Marino
International caps 4 (1 goal)
Honours Czech league 2008, Russian Super Cup 2009

Juan Daniel FORLIN

Europe beckons for young Boca Junior

ARGENTINA

HIS SENIOR club debut may have only been a little more than a year ago, but the 21-year-old has already established himself as one of Argentina's most important centre-backs.

And there are those at Boca who have compared him to the club's record appearance holder Roberto Mouzo...such as Mouzo himself. The club legend, who was only sent off twice in his 426 appearances for Boca, coached him when he first joined the club and says: "Look at Forlin now. It's like me. He doesn't have to commit fouls."

Gifted with wonderful timing in the tackle, the youngster jumped through the Boca ranks and was picked up by Real Madrid's second string. But after 18 months in Spain he was forced to return to Argentina because of problems with his documents.

Although he made his first-team debut last year, he remained well down the pecking order at the Bombonera until a game against Ecuador's LDU in September. Boca fielded a reserve side against the reigning Libertadores champions and looked set to fall behind as Luis Bolanos bore down on their goal – until Forlin appeared with a saving tackle that removed the danger and marked him out as a defender of real class.

He was rapidly promoted to the first team and slotted in as though he had been there for years. Within two months he was a championship winner, though he missed the final game of a three-way play-off against Tigre after a horrifying clash of heads in the previous game against San Lorenzo had put him in hospital.

There is surely a time limit on the number of scars and medals he will pick up in the service of the club as he attracts interest from all over Europe and Boca grow increasingly tempted to cash in. He grew up closer to the Paraguayan border than Buenos Aires and Boca's investment in a national coaching network is tied in with their strategy of producing players to sell in order to maintain a competitive squad.

So Forlin's long-term contribution to Argentinian football is likely to be in the national team.

At the 2005 South American Under-17 Championship he was captain of his country in one game but missed a penalty in the decisive match as the team were eliminated. Then, at Under-20 level, he was called up for the 2007 World Youth Cup but omitted from the final squad.

Diego Maradona has made a point of fast-tracking Forlin into the senior Argentina squad and, with few believing that Martin Demichelis and Gabriel Heinze will form the centre-back pairing in the World Cup, a full debut is surely only a question of time.

"At the moment I'm just enjoying every training session here and I'm feeling at home," he said after he was called up by Maradona in March.

As Argentina struggle to replace the quality of Roberto Ayala at the heart of the defence, many of Forlin's countrymen will be trusting that he feels equally at home when he finally gets his place in the starting XI.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Boca Juniors
Country Argentina
Born January 10, 1988, in Reconquista, Santa Fe
Honours Argentinian opening championship 2008

MEMORIES

The great teams, big personalities and major talking points

STANLEY MATTHEWS

The

Brian Glanville remembers the man who was dubbed "the wizard of the dribble"

THE PHENOMENAL career of Stanley Matthews was significant for so many reasons. For his brilliance, obviously; as a superbly and supremely elusive outside-right who deservedly became the first European Footballer of the Year; for his amazing longevity, which saw him play league football at the age of 50; and, alas, for the bleak light thrown by his sometimes frustrated international career on the almost traditional mistrust in English football of the idiosyncratic maverick.

Among these categories, I've not included the so-called "Matthews Final" of 1953 when, in the closing minutes of the game between Blackpool and Bolton Wanderers, with the match – clearly Matthews' third and last FA Cup Final – slipping away from his team, he bewildered the Bolton defence, enabling Blackpool to come from 3-1 down to win 4-3, with Bill Perry scoring the winning goal. This is because, while not belittling Matthews' virtuosity, the fact remains that Bolton were down to nine fit men and that their two injured players – Eric Bell, the left-half, and Tommy Banks, the left-back – were not there to oppose him.

Simply the best...Matthews beats Brazilian Nilton Santos

When it comes to Wembley, where he excelled so many times, I prefer to think of a May afternoon in 1956 when, in a friendly against Brazil, the 41-year-old Matthews played havoc with Nilton Santos, then arguably the best left-back in the world. Afterwards, in the dressing room, he told us how furious it made him to see himself described as "too old". There were times, he said, when he "wanted to tear the paper across".

Born in the Potteries, at Hanley in

Too good...Arsenal full-back Dennis Evans struggles to keep up with Blackpool's winger

magician

February 1915, he was the son of Jack Matthews, a boxer nicknamed "The Fighting Barber of Hanley", who made his children stand in front of an open window in all weathers, deep breathing. Stanley became equally focused on his physical condition and later in life he would take long walks across the Blackpool sands. He never drank or smoked, and it was said his bedroom light would be out by 9pm.

As a schoolboy he once scored 10 goals from centre-half before Stoke City, his local club, gave him a job in their offices. He made his senior debut in Stoke's then-second division team aged 17, in March 1932, and won his first England cap as a 19-year-old in September 1934 against Wales.

His second international was the notorious Battle of Highbury against Italy, who ran wild for much of the match, in November 1934. Afterwards the misguided *Daily Mail* sports columnist Geoffrey Simpson wrote: "I saw Matthews play just as moderately in the recent inter-League match, exhibiting the same slowness and hesitation. Perhaps he lacks the big match temperament." Perhaps!

The truth is, however, that for all his excellence across the years, Matthews never really consolidated an England place. True, there were times when his individualism frustrated his fellow attackers, who were never quite sure when they were going to get the ball back, yet with his astonishing swerve unbalancing the full-back, his initial burst of pace and his perfect centres, he could always create important goals – not least in April 1939 when he swerved and sped his way up the right wing to cross the ball from which Tommy Lawton headed the 2-1 winner in England's first victory over Scotland at Hampden Park for many years.

"Don't ask me how I do it," he once replied when asked about that body swerve. "It just comes out of me under pressure."

European recognition...he received the Ballon d'Or in 1957

Local hero...Stoke City were Matthews' first and last professional club

Suits you sir... on his way to receive his knighthood in London with his wife

Out in the cold

When that other superb right winger Tom Finney came back from the war, Matthews found himself out in the cold until May 1947, when it suddenly dawned on the England selectors that the two could co-exist. With Matthews on the right and Finney on the left, they beat Portugal 10-0 in Lisbon.

By this time, Matthews was on the

A game of two Stans

The 1953 Cup Final is forever remembered as the "Matthews Final" but it was always a source of extreme embarrassment to Matthews that team-mate and centre-forward Stan Mortensen, the scorer of a hat-trick in Blackpool's recovery from 3-1 down to win 4-3, did not receive greater recognition.

In his autobiography, Matthews referred to the match as the "Mortensen Final" and of his formidable partnership with Mortensen he said: "With the passing of each game, we developed a greater understanding of one another's style of play. A couple of years down the line it was as if we could read one another's minds. The on-the-field relationship was uncanny. When such a partnership is formed in football, it produces magical moments.

"For a forward renowned for his goalscoring, he would often drop off quite deep to collect the ball and once he had it I'd take off down the wing. Invariably I'd never look back, the ball would be pushed in front of me to run on to, or come looping over my shoulder beautifully weighted with back spin on it so it slowed up ready for me to collect without breaking stride.

"Morty would head off for the left of the penalty spot, then with a burst of lightning speed head towards the near post. His change in direction and speed threw defenders and more often than not it meant he arrived at the near post in space.

"Once airborne, it was as if the thumb and first finger of the right hand of the good Lord had reached down, nipped the shirt on his back and held him there because Morty seemed to defy gravity and hang in the air for ages."

Of Mortensen's death in 1991, one anonymous wit noted: "They'll probably call it the Matthews funeral."

The dream team...Matthews (left) and Mortensen

Many happy returns...in the Stoke dressing room on his 50th birthday

verge of becoming a Blackpool player. He had been with the club as a guest while serving with the Royal Air Force during the war and after returning to Stoke he found himself inexplicably at odds with the manager Bob McGrory, who had been a team-mate in the pre-war years.

Indeed, early in the 1946-47 season, when football "officially" resumed after the war, McGrory dropped him, preferring a younger outside-right in George Mountford, who would reward him in 1950 by skipping off, together with the Stoke and England centre-half Neil Franklin, to join, illicitly, the Santa Fe club of Bogota in Colombia.

Matthews would be far happier, anyway, back at Blackpool, where he and his first wife ran a boarding house. But when it came to the 1950 World Cup finals he wasn't even included in the initial squad and was actually on tour with the FA team in North America when he suddenly got the call to join England in Brazil. Thus he missed their first two games, including the traumatic 1-0 defeat by a scratch USA side, some opining that his presence would have made all the difference, though it surely should not have been needed.

One of his outstanding earlier games for England was at Tottenham against Czechoslovakia in 1937. When the right-half Jack Crayston went off injured, reducing England to 10 men, Matthews moved to inside-right, scored three goals, two with his left foot, and England won the game 5-4.

The following year, in Berlin, he took spectacular revenge on Germany left-back Reinhold Munzenberg, who had played him out of the game when the teams had previously met. With Matthews irresistible, England won gloriously 6-3 after having been obliged, for "diplomatic" reasons, to give the Nazi salute before the game.

In January 1965, shortly before his 50th birthday, he became the first British footballer to be knighted. Yet right to the end of his extraordinary career he would say "you must have butterflies" before a match. How well one remembers that, in the Stoke dressing room, before his comeback game at the Victoria Ground in 1962, he told me, distractedly: "I'm not really with you at the moment, Brian."

Among many other distinguished matches was that at Hampden in May 1947, when Great Britain beat the Rest of Europe 6-1. And in May 1948 he tormented poor Alberto Eliani, the second choice left-back, when England beat Italy 4-0 in Turin.

Altogether, he played 698 league games for Stoke City and Blackpool, scoring 71 goals, and won 54 official caps for England, scoring 11 times. After retiring as a player he managed Port Vale for one season. He passed away in February 2000 at the age of 85. ●

"Don't ask me how I do it. It just comes out of me under pressure"

Matthews was at a loss to explain how he managed his body swerve

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

FROM THE ARCHIVES

SEPTEMBER 1970

Matthews bids for comeback

SIR Stanley Matthews has come out of soccer retirement, and is proving that at 55 you are young enough if you're fit enough and good enough.

This dramatic re-entry on to the international sporting scene is staggering to contemplate though one has to mellow the surprise because this is exactly the kind of caprice to be expected from a remarkable personality.

I have known him probably longer than any other European sports writer, and always recognised the complete unpredictability as he played alternatively for England, Stoke and Blackpool.

Yet I must immediately confess to being caught out on the wrong foot when Maltese friends phoned me to say that the idol of four decades was going to wear those famous footballing slippers once again.

If it had been in an indeterminate friendly or something of similar low level the unexpected reappearance might not have stunned nearly so much. But Stan didn't plan the great comeback on those lines. No, sir. Nothing less than a European Cup game for him. And why not?

In the event, his official return was planned against most formidable opposition. No less than Real Madrid, testing stuff at any time, anywhere.

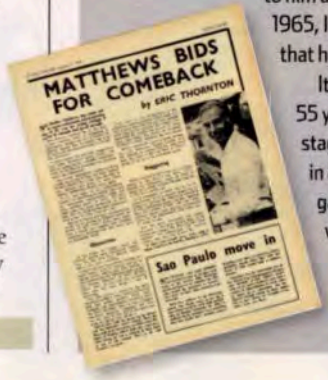
I had wondered occasionally whether this might happen when he moved over to the George Cross island and, after buying a villa overlooking the Mediterranean, gradually became interested in local sporting affairs.

The odds against a return shortened suddenly when Malta's Hibernian club had staffing troubles. Their coach resigned, and immediately everybody suggested that Stan was the man for the job if he could be talked into taking it.

What a wonderful piece of good fortune this is for Hibernian, though it is still difficult to realise that the man who gave his name to the 1953 Cup Final is going to be up to his old tricks again. When I joined 35,000 others in a tribute to him at Stoke's ground on April 28, 1965, I never for a moment thought that he would have another go.

It is delightful to know that he is 55 years young, yet it is equally staggering to reflect he has played in 886 club and international games since signing professional when only 16 years of age.

It takes your breath away. Let's wish a happy return to Stanley Matthews, CBE.


MATTHEWS BIDS FOR COMEBACK
by ERIC THORNTON

Sao Paulo move in

Cradle of Swedish football

Peterjon Cresswell takes a tour of one of the cities hosting the European Under-21 Championship

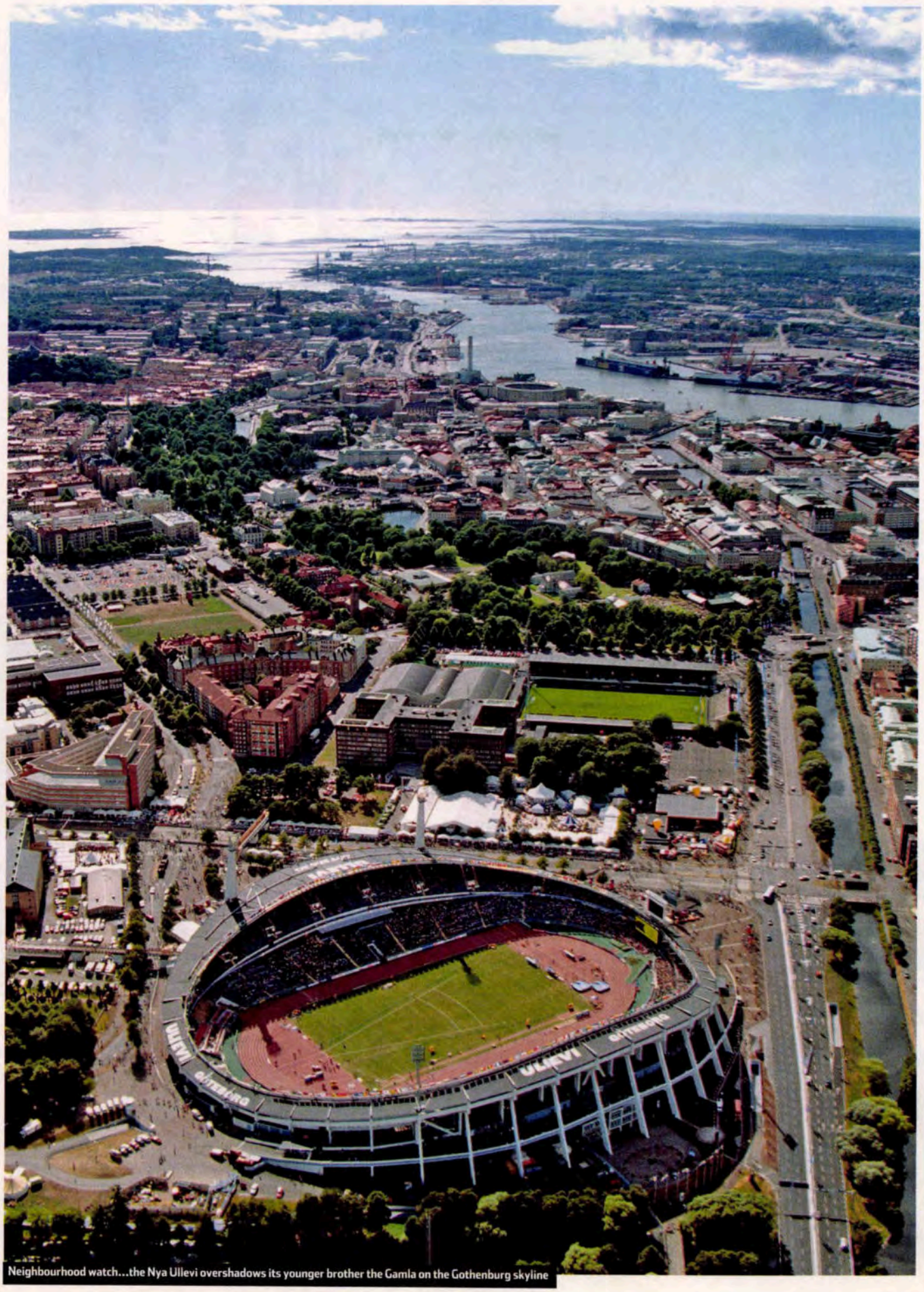
SWEDEN's second largest city has won the lion's share of league titles, mainly thanks to the modern-day exploits of IFK. But while the twice UEFA Cup-winners try to reassert their authority on the domestic scene, their home city has the honour of hosting four European Under-21 Championship games in a new stadium.

And progress from the host nation – games are also being played in Malmo, Helsingborg and Halmstad – should see a level of interest similar to when Holland staged and lifted the same trophy two years ago.

The new Gamla Ullevi, built to replace the venerable stadium of the same name, will have a seated capacity of 16,700 for the three matches in Group B, as well as the semi-final on June 26. The stadium is also the new home of Gothenburg's three main clubs – IFK, Orgryte and GAIS – and was packed out when Orgryte and GAIS opened it in April.

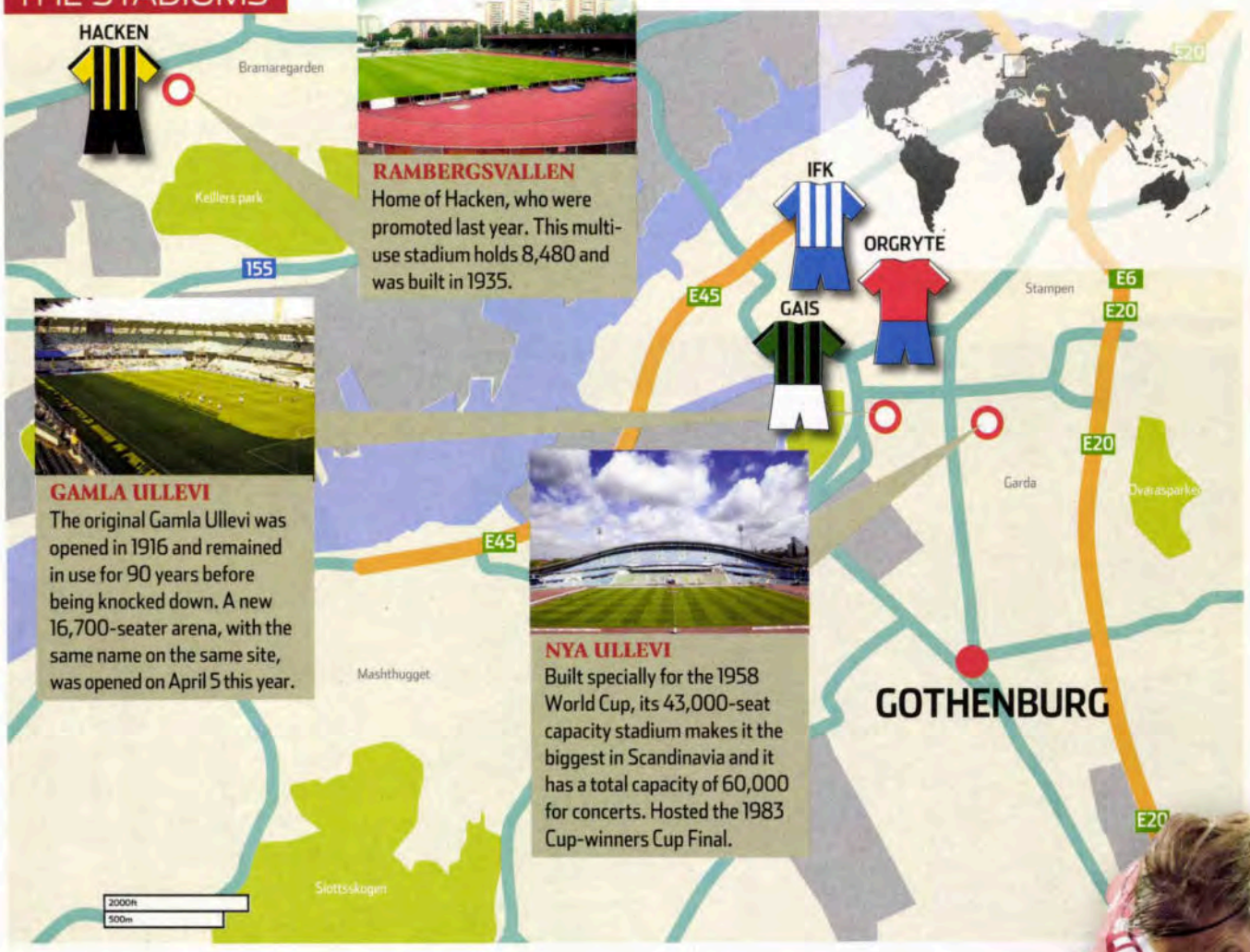
Gothenburg is the cradle of Swedish football, the game taking root here in the 1870s. Early competitions only involved clubs from this industrial hub, where the FA was

Getting in the mood... Swedish fans could be heading for the Gamla Ullevi, above, if the team reaches the semi-final



Neighbourhood watch...the Nya Ullevi overshadows its younger brother the Gamla on the Gothenburg skyline

THE STADIUMS



based, and Sweden's first international took place here, against Norway in 1908.

The city's three main clubs were formed at the turn of the century, working-class IFK at the Cafe Olivedal and permanent also-rans GAIS at the Ehdlunds Cafe. However, it was Orgryte, taking their support from Gothenburg's middle classes, who were initially the top dogs in town.

City rivalry...GAIS (stripes) take on promoted Hacken

Supporters' clashes

Orgryte won 11 championships before a proper national league started in the 1920s, but even in those pre-war days trouble between their supporters and those of IFK was common, with clashes either in the ground or on the local trams.

> **"After Gren left for Serie A, IFK spent three decades in the doldrums"**

On the pitch, IFK's Gunnar Gren emerged as the first big international star and, along with Gunnar Nordahl and Nils Liedholm, formed the famous "Grenoli" trio that won Olympic gold with Sweden in 1948. After Gren left for Serie A, IFK were relegated, bounced back, but then spent the next three decades in the doldrums. It marked a period of relative quiet as far as the city's football was concerned. Orgryte fared little better, taking a rare title in 1985 and the Cup 15 years later. GAIS, having picked up domestic trophies in each decade up to 1954, yo-yoed between divisions. It fell upon Sven Goran Eriksson to reverse IFK's fortunes and instigate the club's golden era. Winning the Cup in 1979, IFK began attracting the best players in the country, such as Stig Fridriksson and Roland Nilsson.

Despite Eriksson's departure, they made a clean sweep of the trophies in 1982: a domestic double and, improbably, the UEFA Cup. The blue-and-whites then repeated the UEFA Cup victory in 1987, a year after losing out to Barcelona in the semi-final of the European Cup.

While IFK were winning consecutive

domestic titles, they performed with considerable aplomb in the early years of the Champions League, beating both Milan and Manchester United in the group stages. However, IFK failed to capitalise on their remarkable success. Although on paper the club was moving from a part-time operation to professional outfit, there was still an amateur mentality. Star names such as Stefan Rehn and Kennet Andersson were allowed to go and IFK's domestic hegemony disappeared.

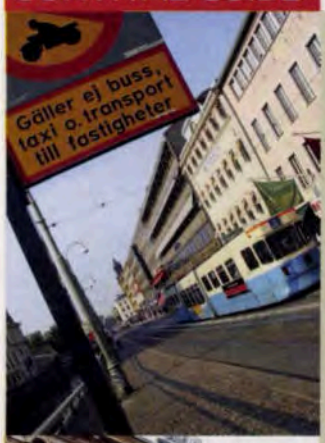
New crop

It took another decade for IFK to bounce back, winning the title in 2007 and the Cup a year later with a new crop of players, such as attacking midfielder Pontus Wernbloom, who is off to Dutch champions AZ next season. IFK hero in the trophy-winning era and now sports director, Hakan Mild, summed up the situation by suggesting that the club should educate and develop these young players before they further their careers abroad.

IFK continue to keep the Gothenburg flag flying in the Allsvenskan. While Orgryte took only one point from the first 10 games of the new season and GAIS, plus new boys Hacken – promoted last year – linger near the bottom of the table IFK are challenging for another domestic crown – but for how long? ●

At arm's length...IFK's Hjalmar Jonsson shields the ball from Danny Ervik of Orgryte on Gothenburg derby day

SURVIVAL GUIDE



City delights

● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT

Landvetter airport is 16 miles east of town. Buses (journey time 30 minutes, tickets 50Skr) run every 15 minutes. Budget airlines use Save, eight miles north-west (shuttle bus, 30Skr). The city centre is walkable and there's an extensive bus and tram system (returns 40Skr). A Gothenburg Passport (210Skr) covers public transport and entry to most attractions for 24 hours. For taxis call 650 000.

● HOTELS & INFORMATION

The tourist office at Kungsportsplatsen 2 (+46 31 612 500, www.goteborg.com) has room booking service. Mid-range, the First Hotel G (Nils Ericsonsplatsen 4, +46 31 637 200, www.firsthotels.se/g, Skr 1,400) is atop Central Station. Cheaper alternatives include the Nice Bed & Breakfast (Utlandagatan 18, +46 31 202 150, Skr 600).

● EATING & DRINKING

Cosmoplitan cuisine features imaginative use of seafood. Sports bars such as the Plain Kitchen (Risasgatan 8, +46 31 711 3575) and O'Leary's (Ostra Hamngatan 37, +46 31 711 5519) offer plenty of big-match action on the numerous TVs.

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT

Gothenburg's best sights have a seafaring theme – the Maritime Museum (Karl Johansgatan 1-3, (+46 31 612 900), the floating Maritime Centre (Packhuskajen 8, +46 31 105 950) and a replica of the historic tea clipper, the East Indiaman (Eriksberg, +46 31 779 3450). Take a sightseeing boat from Kungsportsbron or visit the Liseberg Amusement Park (Orgrytevagen 5, +46 31 400 100).

● MATCH DAY

The Gamla Ullevi is a short walk from Central Station. Seats cost 150-200Skr, with derby games around 100Skr dearer. Buy tickets at www.gais.se, www.ois.se and www.ifkgoteborg.se, or at the Scandinavium arena (+46 31 811 020) near the Gamla Ullevi. For Under-21 Championship tickets visit u21tickets.com or call +46 77 170 70 70.

● FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

EURO UNDER-21S
Gamla Ullevi Stadium
June 15 Germany v Spain
June 18 England v Spain
June 22 Finland v Spain
June 26 Semi-final

IFK
Gamla Ullevi Stadium
July 19 Trelleborgs (date subject to change)

ORGRYTE
Gamla Ullevi Stadium
July 12 Gefle (date subject to change)

GAIS
Gamla Ullevi Stadium
Jul 12 Halmstads (date subject to change)
Jul 19 AIK (date subject to change)

HACKEN
Rambergsvallen Stadium
July 12 Hammarby

More Soccer Cities at worldsoccer.com/travel

PRO-DIRECT
www.prodirectsoccer.com

www.prodirectsoccer.com
The World's Largest Online Football Store

adidas | PRO-DIRECT www.prodirectsoccer.com NEW RELEASE

F50i EVERY TEAM NEEDS THE SPARK

PRO-DIRECT ★★★★★ PRO LEVEL

adidas F50i TUNiT Pro-Lite
Cyan/White/Black
Firm Ground - PDS 002 010 344
£99.99
Sizes 5 - 13 inc ½'s
SPEED

PRO-DIRECT ★★★★★ PRO LEVEL

adidas F50i TUNiT Pro-Lite
Black/White/Cyan
Firm Ground - PDS 002 010 348
£99.99
Sizes 5 - 13 inc ½'s
SPEED

PRO-DIRECT ★★★★★ PRO LEVEL
LEATHER

adidas F50i TUNiT Leather
Black/White/Cyan
Comfort Pack - PDS 002 010 350
£124.99
Sizes 5 - 13 inc ½'s
SPEED

WIRED FOR SPEED
DEFENDERS BEWARE

NEW PLATINUM /HOT RED
MERCURIAL RANGE PRE-ORDER NOW

DEFENDERS BEWARE: INTRODUCING THE ALL NEW MERCURIAL VAPOR SUPERFLY, NIKE'S LIGHTEST BOOT EVER.

ULTRA-STRONG FLYWIRE INNOVATION TECHNOLOGY SHAVES OUNCES OFF THE WEIGHT AND SECONDS OFF THE TIME IT TAKES TO SKIN PAST ANY DEFENCE. ADD IN A NEW CARBON-FIBRE CHASSIS WITH GREATER GRIP AND STRENGTH THE SUPERFLY IS THE ULTIMATE LIGHT WEIGHT BOOT.

Nike Mercurial Superfly
Metallic Platinum/Hot Red
Firm Ground - PDS 002 009 A01
£224.99
Sizes 5 - 12 inc ½'s
SPEED

FULL collection & Junior Boots online: www.prodirectsoccer.com

PRO-DIRECT ★★★★★★ ELITE LEVEL

PRO-DIRECT www.prodirectsoccer.com NEW RELEASE

PRO-DIRECT ★★★★★ PRO LEVEL
JUNIORS AVAILABLE

Nike Mercurial Vapor V
Metallic Platinum/Hot Red
Firm Ground - PDS 002 009 A02
£129.99
Sizes 5 - 14 inc ½'s
SPEED

PRO-DIRECT ★★★★ CLUB LEVEL
JUNIORS AVAILABLE

Nike Mercurial Talaria
Metallic Platinum/Hot Red
Firm Ground - PDS 002 009 A03
£74.99
Sizes 5 - 13 inc ½'s
SPEED

PRO-DIRECT ★★★ TEAM LEVEL
JUNIORS AVAILABLE

Nike Mercurial Steam
Metallic Platinum/Hot Red
Firm Ground - PDS 002 009 A04
£54.99
Sizes 5 - 14 inc ½'s
SPEED

PRO PERSONALISATION
BOOT iD
PRO-DIRECT MAKE IT YOURS

PRO-DIRECT
www.prodirectsoccer.com

CLOBBER UNIQUE!

CHOOSE OR TELL US THE PLAYERS YOU WANT, AND WE'LL MAKE THE T-SHIRTS. THE WORDING IS UP TO YOU!

Cult Zeros is a bit of fun. There is no place for bigotry, sectarianism, racism, sexism, hatefulness (or cussing of Fulham players!!!). Cult Zeros have the right to refuse to do requests they believe inappropriate. Cheers!

www.cultzeros.co.uk

DirectSoccer.co.uk

EMBROIDERY
TEAMWEAR KIT EMBROIDERY

from **£1.91**

MITRE MALMO
FREE PRINTED BALL BAG with every 10

£5.25

MICRO AGILITY HURDLE
6, 9 AND 12 INCH HURDLES

from **£2.25**

TRAINING BIBS
£10 for Set of 10 - BOYS - YOUTH - MEN

£1 each

BOUNDARY POLES
SET of 12 plus FREE BAG

from **£26.95**

SPACE MARKERS
SET of 50 MARKERS

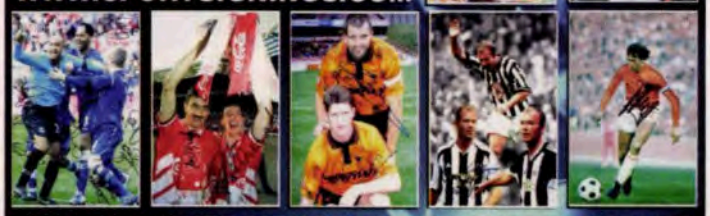
£6.95

2009/10 NIKE, PUMA & PROSTAR TEAMWEAR NOW AVAILABLE

t:01382 737850 e:sales@directsoccer.co.uk

MEMORABILIA

SPORT Signings
SIGNED FOOTBALL MEMORABILIA
" DONT BUY FAKE AUTOGRAPHS "
EVERYTHING WE SELL WE GET IN PERSON
WEBSITE UPDATED DAILY!
TEL: 01704 573560 / 07970982561
WWW.SPORTSIGNINGS.COM



90% OF SIGNED MEMORABILIA ON EBAY IS FAKE

FASHION

SPORTING KICKS

2008 Retro Tracktop Range Now in Stock

Range includes Tracktops & hoodies with prices from only £19.99

Visit the Sporting Kicks webshop for the largest range of football T-Shirts, Pin Badges, Scarves & Flags

For a copy of our *free* catalogue, please call our sales line on 020 8553 0054

Web: www.sportingkicks.co.uk Email: info@sportingkicks.co.uk

FOOTBALL FLAGS

FOOTBALL KITS

subside sports

COMING SOON! THE BRAND NEW ITALY HOME SHIRT FROM PUMA NOW AVAILABLE TO PRE-ORDER. CHECK WEBSITE FOR DETAILS. SUBSIDE.CO.UK

ONLY £39.99

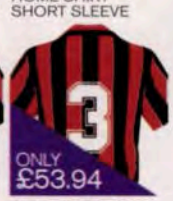
09-10 LIVERPOOL AWAY SHIRT LAUNCH JUNE 11TH

ONLY £44.99

09-10 AC MILAN HOME SHIRT SHORT SLEEVE

ONLY £57.94

90-91 AC MILAN CUP WINNERS + VAN BASTEN NO.9



ONLY £53.94

90-91 AC MILAN CUP WINNERS + NO.3 £53.94

TEL: 0845 8382442
EMAIL: SALES@SUBSIDE.CO.UK
WEB: SUBSIDE.CO.UK

VIDEO/CINE FILMS

Soccer Matches on DVD 1958-2007
World Cups, Euro Champs, Euro Cups, Copa America, Maradona, Pele, Cruyff, Brazil, Milan, Juventus, Barcelona, Souther America, Europe, Asia.
Email for 1,500 Games List
sammi271@btinternet.com
Soccer Classics, Flat 1, 54A Coronation Street, Blackpool FY1 4PD

www.RareSoccerVideos.com
Thousands of old games from the past

Watch the outstanding players and the best teams

Pele Maradonna Beckenbauer Cruyff and others

Relive the memories of those great games

vhs-pal, vhs-ntsc, dvd, world wide shipping
www.RareSoccerVideos.com

PLAY-BY-MAIL

Pro Soccer PBM

Quick, easy PBM for all ages running since 1989 via post or email. Up to date squads for Britain, Europe and South America.

Send your details for FREE START UP at
www.olympiapbm.co.uk

6 Sandy Lane, Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3GS England
Fax: 0115 943 6197

PROGRAMMES

PROGRAMME PROMOTIONS

VISIT THE ESSENTIAL WEBSITE FOR PROGRAMME COLLECTORS
www.footballprogrammes.com
which includes an up to date listing of our stock, pre-war to date
No internet access ? No problem!
Clients who have never sent before, forward your name and address to:
P.O. BOX 209, Hounslow, Middx TW3 4DF

For a free copy of our next bi-monthly
MAIL ORDER CATALOGUE

If you have been on our database previously please send 5 x 1st class stamps towards costs.
FOOTBALL PROGRAMME COLLECTIONS ALWAYS WANTED ! Tel: 01923 680988

MISCELLANEOUS

FOOTBALL HEAVEN

For all kinds of football souvenirs & memorabilia

Badges, books, pennants, shirts, videos and **flags and scarves for all 32 2006 World Cup teams in stock.**

Over 500 different football books, many out of print. Over 700 different football videos, many deleted.
Over 2,200 different football badges from around the world and much more.

Flags and badges for World Cup 2006.

www.footballheaven.net
email: info@footballheaven.net
Phone: (44) 01464 821333
Fax: (44) 01464 821330

WorldSoccer

Michael Hewitt Programmes

For our introductory catalogue covering all aspects of football collecting:
PROGRAMMES/MATCH TICKETS/BADGES/MEMORABILIA
just send your full address.
"Overseas: 1st Catalogue free. UK: Send 60p"
LARGE EUROPEAN/WORLD CUP AND INTERNATIONAL SECTIONS.
WE BUY OR EXCHANGE FROM ALL COUNTRIES - CARRIAGE PAID.
All major CREDIT and DEBIT cards accepted.
20 Suzanne Crescent, South Elmsall, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF9 2BB.
Telephone: 01977 643107
Fax: 01977 648655
E-mail: HEWITTPROG@aol.com

FREE
PROGRAMME CATALOGUE

To receive a **FREE** copy of our latest catalogue (listing several thousand different mint condition Big Match and League teams programmes etc.) please send your name and address to:
STEVE EARL FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES (WS)
BROAD ST., BUNGAY, SUFFOLK NR35 1AH
or phone **01986 892621** or visit
www.footballprogs.co.uk
(Big Match Programmes also purchased)

FASHION

PUNKFOOTBALL.COM
Classic T-Shirts for real football fans
Brian Clough Best Manager (Available in black or red)
Rush Fowler Dalglish (Red Hot Chili Peppers style)
If It Wasn't For Birds And Booze I'd Have Played For England!
George Best Priceless (Available in green or red)
Revies Boys
Bobby Moore Simply The Best
Celtic Lisbon Lions 1967
Cantona I kicked the hooligan
Dear God
Robin Friday Better Than Best (Available in Reading or Cardiff colours)
Secure On-line Ordering
Full Money Back Guarantee
Loads of Exclusive Designs
FREE Colour Catalogue Available
Freephone
0800 280 2218
WWW.PUNKFOOTBALL.COM
All t-shirts are screenprinted (not transfers)
100's of great designs in stock

EDUCATION & COURSES

your HEROES & LEGENDS
Match worn memorabilia
www.footballmatchshirts.co.uk
for the connoisseur collector

WORLD SERVICE

THE ULTIMATE GLOBAL NEWS AND RESULTS SECTION

Too close to call

Having finished the season level on points, and with goal difference not applying in the Belgian league, Tom De Sutter of Anderlecht (left) and Standard Liege's Marcos Camozzato clash in the first leg of the title play-off. More information and tables, page 101.

INTERNATIONALS

Page 84	**AFC Challenge Cup**
Page 84	**Friendlies**
Page 84	**World Cup qualifiers**

DIGEST

Page 86	**Belgium**
Page 87	**Greece**
Page 88	**Holland**
Page 89	**Scotland**
Page 90	**England/Germany/ Albania**
Page 91	**Bosnia/Cyprus**
Page 92	**Georgia/Malta**
Page 93	**Moldova/N Ireland**
Page 94	**Slovenia/Wales**
Page 95	**People in the news**
Page 96	**Americas**
Page 98	**Africa**
Page 99	**Asia**
Page 100	**Oceania**

CLUB RESULTS

Page 101	**Champions League**
Page 101	**UEFA Cup**
Page 101	**European leagues**
Page 103	**ESM Team of the Month**
Page 105	**ESM Golden Shoe**
Page 109	**Libertadores Cup**
Page 109	**South American leagues**
Page 111	**Central & North America**
Page 112	**Africa**
Page 112	**Asia**
Page 113	**Oceania**
Page 113	**Forthcoming fixtures**

ALBANIA

Kuze in control

Josip Kuze has replaced Ari Haan as national team coach. The 56-year-old Croatian took up the post following spells with Rwanda and Japanese side JEF United.

BELGIUM

Friendly appointment

Frank Vercauteren was placed in charge of the national team for a friendly tournament in Japan – which features games against the hosts and Chile – while a permanent replacement is sought for Rene Vandereycken.

Temporary...Vercauteren

CHINA

New young blood

Former international striker Gao Hongbo has become the country's youngest national team coach for 30 years.

The 43-year-old – who scored eight goals in his 32 international appearances – succeeds Yin Tiesheng, who has been in control on an interim basis since December.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Straka takes over

Frantisek Straka has replaced Petr Rada as coach of the national team. The 50-year-old former Sparta Prague and Borussia Monchengladbach defender played at the 1990 World Cup and was capped 35 times by his country.

ITALY

Maldini says no to one last international cap

Paolo Maldini has turned down an invitation to make a one-off comeback in Italy's friendly match against Northern

RESULTS

AFC CHALLENGE CUP QUALIFIERS

Group A

In Dhaka, Bangladesh

Apr 26
Myanmar 4 (Khin Maung Lwin 3, Yaza Win Thein 15, Pyaye Phyo 48, Myo Min Tun 59)
Macau 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 3,600. **Ref:** Mashentsev (Kyr)

Apr 26
Cambodia 0
Bangladesh 1 (Enamul 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,060. **Ref:** Mozaffarizadehyazdi (Irn)

Apr 28
Macau 1 (Choi Keng-seng 75)
Cambodia 2 (Teab Vathnak 12, Keo Sonkngorn 66)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Saleem (Mdv)

Apr 28
Bangladesh 1 (Enamul 12)
Myanmar 2 (Pai Soe 68, 77)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 14,000. **Ref:** Matsuo (Jap)
Sent off: Nasir (Bangladesh) 87min

Apr 30
Myanmar 1 (Yaza Win Thein 90)
Cambodia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Mozaffarizadehyazdi (Irn)

Apr 30
Bangladesh 3 (Mamunul 37, Zahid 68, 71)
Macau 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,700. **Ref:** Mashentsev (Kyr)

GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Myanmar	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Bangladesh	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Cambodia	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Macau	3	0	0	3	1	9	0

Group B

GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkmenistan	3	3	0	0	15	1	9
Maldives	3	2	0	1	9	5	6
Philippines	3	1	0	2	3	8	3
Bhutan	3	0	0	3	0	13	0

Group C

GROUP C – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kyrgyzstan	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Nepal*	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Palestine*	2	0	2	0	1	1	2

**Nepal finished above Palestine because they had fewer bookings during the qualifiers*

Group D

GROUP D – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sri Lanka	3	2	1	0	9	4	7
Pakistan	3	1	2	0	9	3	5
Taiwan	3	1	1	1	7	3	4
Brunei	3	0	0	3	1	16	0

The four group winners and Bangladesh – the runners-up with the best record (only results against the group winners and third-placed team counted) – qualified for the finals, to which India, North Korea and Tajikistan qualified directly. Finals to be played in India from July 28 to August 8, 2010

FRIENDLIES

Wednesday, April 22

Apr 22 - Cayenne
French Guiana 0
Surinam 0

Saturday, April 25

Apr 25 - Bamako
Mali 3 (Camara 18, I Traore 38, Diamoutene 86)
Equatorial Guinea 0
HT: 2-0

Saturday, May 9

May 9 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 0
DR Congo 2 (Kaluyitukadioko 5, 49)
HT: 0-1

Wednesday, May 13

May 13 - Amman
Jordan 2 (Dheeb 50, Al Zebdah 70)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 0-0

May 13 - San Cristobal
Venezuela 1 (Velasquez 24)
Costa Rica 1 (W Granados 28)
HT: 1-1
Venezuela: Romo (Morales 46; Camacho 55) - Boada, Velasquez, Yeguez, Perozo, Flores (Parra 61), Di Giorgi (Arocha 66), Fernandez, Pena, Garcia (Fernandez 83), A Rondon (Del Valle 71).
Costa Rica: Cambronero - Fernandez, Segura (Seravalli 90), Delgado, Oviedo, Herrera, Gatgens (Davis 65), E Granados, W Granados (Sancho 84), Urena (Mudarra 90), Camacho (J Martinez 65).

Wednesday, May 20

May 20 - Santa Fe
Argentina 3 (De Federico 27, Bergessio 40, 85)
Panama 1 (Barahona 29)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Antequera (Bol)
Argentina: Pozo (Campestrini 72) - Caruzzo, Otamendi, Ferrero (Canuto 67), Salvio (Blanco 57), Bernadello (Prediger 46), Rinaudo (Zuculini 57), De Federico (Papa 46), Montenegro, Bergessio, Sand (Fuertes 46).
Panama: Penedo - Gun, Solanilla, Moreno, Rivera, Enriquez (Solis 48), Torres, Phillips (Jimenez 81), Barahona (Herrera 59), Garces (Aguilar 63), Tejada.

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

AFRICA

(6 finals places, one of which goes automatically to South Africa as hosts)

3rd stage

Group winners qualify for the finals

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gabon	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Togo	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Morocco	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Cameroon	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Next games
06.06.09 Gabon-Togo
07.06.09 Cameroon-Morocco
20.06.09 Gabon-Cameroon
20.06.09 Morocco-Togo

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Mozambique	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Nigeria	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Kenya	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

Next games
06.06.09 Tunisia-Mozambique
07.06.09 Nigeria-Kenya
20.06.09 Kenya-Mozambique
20.06.09 Tunisia-Nigeria

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Zambia	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Algeria	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Rwanda	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

Next games
06.06.09 Zambia-Rwanda
07.06.09 Algeria-Egypt
20.06.09 Zambia-Algeria
05.07.09 Egypt-Rwanda

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Mali	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Sudan	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Benin	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Next games
07.06.09 Benin-Sudan
07.06.09 Mali-Ghana
20.06.09 Sudan-Ghana
21.06.09 Mali-Benin

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	1	1	0	0	5	0	3
Burkina Faso	1	1	0	0	4	2	3
Guinea	1	0	0	1	2	4	0
Malawi	1	0	0	1	0	5	0

Next games
06.06.09 Malawi-Burkina Faso
07.06.09 Guinea-Ivory Coast
20.06.09 Burkina Faso-Ivory Coast
21.06.09 Guinea-Malawi

ASIA

(4.5 finals places)

4th stage

Top two in each group qualify for the finals. The third-placed countries will meet in a play-off, the winners of which will meet New Zealand, the Oceania section winners, for a place in the finals

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Australia	5	4	1	0	8	0	13
Japan	5	3	2	0	8	3	11
Bahrain	6	2	1	3	5	6	7
Uzbekistan	6	1	1	4	5	8	4
Qatar	6	1	1	4	4	13	4

Remaining games
06.06.09 Qatar-Australia
06.06.09 Uzbekistan-Japan
10.06.09 Australia-Bahrain
10.06.09 Japan-Qatar
17.06.09 Australia-Japan
17.06.09 Bahrain-Uzbekistan

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	5	3	2	0	9	3	11
North Korea	6	3	1	2	7	5	10
Saudi Arabia	6	3	1	2	8	8	10
Iran	5	1	3	1	6	6	6
UAE	6	0	1	5	6	14	1

Remaining games
06.06.09 North Korea-Iran
06.06.09 UAE-South Korea
10.06.09 Iran-UAE
10.06.09 South Korea-Saudi Arabia
17.06.09 Saudi Arabia-North Korea
17.06.09 South Korea-Iran

CONCACAF

(3.5 finals places)

4th stage

Top three qualify for the finals. The fourth-placed country will meet the fifth-placed South American country for a place in the finals

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
United States	3	2	1	0	7	2	7
Costa Rica	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Honduras	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Mexico	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
El Salvador	3	0	2	1	4	5	2
Trinidad & Tob	3	0	2	1	3	6	2

Remaining games
04.06.09 Costa Rica-United States
06.06.09 Trinidad & Tob-Costa Rica
07.06.09 El Salvador-Mexico
07.06.09 United States-Honduras
11.06.09 Honduras-El Salvador
11.06.09 Mexico-Trinidad & Tob
12.08.09 Mexico-United States
12.08.09 Trinidad & Tob-El Salvador
13.08.09 Honduras-Costa Rica
06.09.09 Costa Rica-Mexico
06.09.09 Honduras-Trinidad & Tob
06.09.09 United States-El Salvador

All over...Maldini (right)

Ireland in Pisa on 6 June.

"I prefer to leave football with an official match because I am not a fan of farewell games," said Maldini.

"I am preparing for my farewell from football without any regrets after almost 25 years in the game. A different life awaits me."

The 40-year-old Milan defender, who retires this summer, won his 126th and last cap in 2002.

JORDAN

New beginnings

Former Iraq boss Adnan Hamad made a winning start as national coach, beating Zimbabwe 2-0 with an experimental team due to club commitments.

Abdullah Khalid Dheeb and Lo'ai Omran Al Zebdah, who both played in the Under-20 World Cup in Canada two years ago, were the scorers.

MACEDONIA

Campaign leader

Mirsad Jonuz has been appointed national team coach for the rest of the World Cup qualifying campaign.

RUSSIA

Maradona in Moscow

Diego Maradona's Argentina will play a friendly in Moscow on August 12.

Good start...Hamad

09.09.09	Mexico-Honduras
09.09.09	Trinidad & Tob-United States
10.09.09	El Salvador-Costa Rica
10.10.09	Honduras-United States
10.10.09	Mexico-El Salvador
11.10.09	Costa Rica-Trinidad & Tob
14.10.09	El Salvador-Honduras
14.10.09	Trinidad & Tob-Mexico
14.10.09	United States-Costa Rica

EUROPE

(13 finals places)

Group winners qualify for the finals. The best eight runners-up will meet in four head-to-head play-off ties, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Denmark	5	4	1	0	12	2	13
Hungary	6	4	1	1	8	2	13
Portugal	5	1	3	1	6	3	6
Sweden	4	1	3	0	2	1	6
Albania	7	1	3	3	3	6	6
Malta	7	0	1	6	0	17	1

Remaining games

06.06.09	Albania-Portugal
06.06.09	Sweden-Denmark
10.06.09	Sweden-Malta
05.09.09	Denmark-Portugal
05.09.09	Hungary-Sweden
09.09.09	Albania-Denmark
09.09.09	Hungary-Portugal
09.09.09	Malta-Sweden
10.10.09	Denmark-Sweden
10.10.09	Portugal-Hungary
14.10.09	Denmark-Hungary
14.10.09	Portugal-Malta
14.10.09	Sweden-Albania

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece	6	4	1	1	12	4	13
Switzerland	6	4	1	1	11	6	13
Latvia	6	3	1	2	10	6	10
Israel	6	2	3	1	10	8	9
Luxembourg	6	1	1	4	3	13	4
Moldova	6	0	1	5	2	11	1

Remaining games

05.09.09	Israel-Latvia
05.09.09	Moldova-Luxembourg
05.09.09	Switzerland-Greece
09.09.09	Israel-Luxembourg
09.09.09	Latvia-Switzerland
09.09.09	Moldova-Greece
10.10.09	Greece-Latvia
10.10.09	Israel-Moldova
10.10.09	Luxembourg-Switzerland
14.10.09	Greece-Luxembourg
14.10.09	Latvia-Moldova
14.10.09	Switzerland-Israel

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
N Ireland	7	4	1	2	12	6	13
Slovakia	5	4	0	1	10	6	12
Poland	6	3	1	2	18	7	10
Czech Rep	6	2	2	2	6	4	8
Slovenia	6	2	2	2	5	4	8
San Marino	6	0	0	6	1	25	0

Remaining games

06.06.09	Slovakia-San Marino
12.08.09	Slovenia-San Marino
05.09.09	Poland-Northern Ireland
05.09.09	Slovakia-Czech Rep
09.09.09	Czech Rep-San Marino
09.09.09	Northern Ireland-Slovakia
09.09.09	Slovenia-Poland
10.10.09	Czech Rep-Poland
10.10.09	Slovakia-Slovenia
14.10.09	Czech Rep-Northern Ireland
14.10.09	Poland-Slovakia
14.10.09	San Marino-Slovenia

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	6	5	1	0	18	4	16
Russia	5	4	0	1	9	3	12
Finland	4	2	1	1	6	6	7
Wales	6	2	0	4	4	7	6
Azerbaijan	4	0	1	3	0	4	1
Liechtenstein	5	0	1	4	0	13	1

Remaining games

06.06.09	Azerbaijan-Wales
06.06.09	Finland-Liechtenstein
10.06.09	Finland-Russia
12.08.09	Azerbaijan-Germany
05.09.09	Azerbaijan-Finland
05.09.09	Russia-Liechtenstein
09.09.09	Germany-Azerbaijan
09.09.09	Liechtenstein-Finland
09.09.09	Wales-Russia
10.10.09	Finland-Wales
10.10.09	Liechtenstein-Azerbaijan
10.10.09	Russia-Germany
14.10.09	Azerbaijan-Russia
14.10.09	Germany-Finland
14.10.09	Liechtenstein-Wales

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	6	6	0	0	13	2	18
Bosnia-Herz	6	4	0	2	18	7	12
Turkey	6	2	2	2	6	5	8
Belgium	6	2	1	3	10	11	7
Estonia	6	1	2	3	5	15	5
Armenia	6	0	1	5	3	15	1

Remaining games

05.09.09	Armenia-Bosnia-Herzegovina
05.09.09	Spain-Belgium
05.09.09	Turkey-Estonia
09.09.09	Armenia-Belgium
09.09.09	Bosnia-Herzegovina-Turkey
09.09.09	Spain-Estonia
10.10.09	Armenia-Spain
10.10.09	Belgium-Turkey
10.10.09	Estonia-Bosnia-Herzegovina
14.10.09	Bosnia-Herzegovina-Spain
14.10.09	Estonia-Belgium
14.10.09	Turkey-Armenia

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	5	5	0	0	16	4	15
Croatia	5	3	1	1	10	4	10
Ukraine	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Belarus	4	2	0	2	9	6	6
Kazakhstan	5	1	0	4	6	16	3
Andorra	5	0	0	5	1	14	0

Remaining games

06.06.09	Belarus-Andorra
06.06.09	Croatia-Ukraine
06.06.09	Kazakhstan-England
10.06.09	England-Andorra
10.06.09	Ukraine-Kazakhstan
12.08.09	Belarus-Croatia
05.09.09	Croatia-Belarus
05.09.09	Ukraine-Andorra
09.09.09	Andorra-Kazakhstan
09.09.09	Belarus-Ukraine
09.09.09	England-Croatia
10.10.09	Belarus-Kazakhstan
10.10.09	Ukraine-England
14.10.09	Andorra-Ukraine
14.10.09	England-Belarus
14.10.09	Kazakhstan-Croatia

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serbia	5	4	0	1	12	5	12
France	5	3	1	1	7	6	10
Lithuania	6	3	0	3	6	5	9
Austria	5	2	1	2	7	8	7
Romania	5	1	1	3	6	10	4
Faroe Islands	4	0	1	3	1	5	1

Remaining games

06.06.09	Lithuania-Romania
06.06.09	Serbia-Austria
10.06.09	Faroe Islands-Serbia
12.08.09	Faroe Islands-France
05.09.09	Austria-Faroe Islands
05.09.09	France-Romania
09.09.09	Faroe Islands-Lithuania
09.09.09	Romania-Austria
09.09.09	Serbia-France
10.10.09	Austria-Lithuania
10.10.09	France-Faroe Islands
10.10.09	Serbia-Romania
14.10.09	France-Austria
14.10.09	Lithuania-Serbia
14.10.09	Romania-Faroe Islands

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	6	4	2	0	9	3	14
Rep Ireland	6	3	3	0	7	4	12
Bulgaria	5	1	4	0	5	3	7
Cyprus	5	1	1	3	4	7	4
Montenegro	5	0	3	2	3	6	3
Georgia	7	0	3	4	4	9	3

Remaining games

06.06.09	Bulgaria-Rep Ireland
06.06.09	Cyprus-Montenegro
05.09.09	Bulgaria-Montenegro
05.09.09	Cyprus-Rep Ireland
05.09.09	Georgia-Italy
09.09.09	Italy-Bulgaria
09.09.09	Montenegro-Cyprus
10.10.09	Cyprus-Bulgaria
10.10.09	Montenegro-Georgia
10.10.09	Rep Ireland-Italy
14.10.09	Bulgaria-Georgia
14.10.09	Italy-Cyprus
14.10.09	Rep Ireland-Montenegro

Group 9

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	5	5	0	0	12	1	15
Scotland	5	2	1	2	4	6	7
Iceland	5	1	1	3	5	8	4
Macedonia	4	1	0	3	2	7	3
Norway	3	0	2	1	2	3	2

Remaining games

06.06.09	Iceland-Holland
06.06.09	Macedonia-Norway
10.06.09	Holland-Norway
10.06.09	Macedonia-Iceland
12.08.09	Norway-Scotland
05.09.09	Iceland-Norway
05.09.09	Scotland-Macedonia
09.09.09	Norway-Macedonia
09.09.09	Scotland-Holland

OCEANIA

(0.5 finals places)

2nd stage

As group winners, New Zealand will meet the fifth-best Asian country for a place in the finals

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Zealand	6	5	0	1	14	5	15
New Caledonia	6	2	2	2	12	10	8
Fiji	6	2	1	3	8	11	7
Vanuatu	6	1	1	4	5	13	4

SOUTH AMERICA

(4.5 finals places)

Top four qualify for the finals. The fifth-placed country will meet the fourth-placed CONCACAF country for a place in the finals

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paraguay	12	7	3	2	19	9	24
Brazil	12	5	6	1	19	5	21
Chile	12	6	2	4	17	14	20
Argentina	12	5	4	3	18	13	19
Uruguay	12	4	5	3	21	10	17
Colombia	12	3	5	4	6	10	14
Ecuador	12	3	5	4	14	19	14
Venezuela	12	4	1	7	14	22	13
Bolivia	12	3	3	6	19	25	12
Peru	12	1	4	7	6	26	7

Remaining games

06.06.09	Argentina-Colombia
06.06.09	Bolivia-Venezuela
06.06.09	Paraguay-Chile
06.06.09	Uruguay-Brazil
07.06.09	Peru-Ecuador
10.06.09	Ecuador-Argentina
11.06.09	Brazil-Paraguay
11.06.09	Chile-Bolivia
11.06.09	Colombia-Peru
11.06.09	Venezuela-Uruguay
05.09.09	Argentina-Brazil
05.09.09	Chile-Venezuela
05.09.09	Colombia-Ecuador
05.09.09	Paraguay-Bolivia
05.09.09	Peru-Uruguay
09.09.09	Bolivia-Ecuador
09.09.09	Brazil-Chile
09.09.09	Paraguay-Argentina
09.09.09	Uruguay-Colombia
09.09.09	Venezuela-Peru
10.10.09	Argentina-Peru
10.10.09	Bolivia-Brazil
10.10.09	Colombia-Chile
10.10.09	Ecuador-Uruguay
10.10.09	Venezuela-Paraguay
14.10.09	Brazil-Venezuela
14.10.09	Chile-Ecuador
14.10.09	Paraguay-Colombia
14.10.09	Peru-Bolivia
14.10.09	Uruguay-Argentina

BELGIUM Standard edge out Anderlecht

THE NATIONAL team may not be going to South Africa for the World Cup Finals next year, and the country's clubs failed to reach the later stages of the European competitions but, at home, the league season had everything going for it, reaching an exciting conclusion when Anderlecht and Standard Liege finished level on 77 points.

Goal difference would have sufficed in most other nations – making Anderlecht champions – but Belgium likes to be different, so the two had to go head-to-head in a two-legged play-off, the first since 1986, to determine which city would be celebrating. Ultimately, Standard emerged victorious, albeit by the narrowest of margins, to win their 10th title.

The season had been a slow burner with as many as six clubs harbouring hopes of capturing the trophy. As the passion increased, and the suspense mounted, one by one their challenge crumbled. Gent, the two Bruges clubs and Genk all fell by the wayside, leaving Anderlecht and Standard to fight it out.

Both teams won their last league game of the season. With a goal from Mbark Boussoufa, who was voted player of the season, Anderlecht's 2-0 win in Genk was less dramatic than Standard's 1-0 victory over Gent, who missed a penalty in injury time. But for Sinan Bolat's save from Costa Rica international Bryan Ruiz, Standard would have conceded their title there and then.

The first leg of the play-off finished 1-1 in Brussels, with Anderlecht going ahead with a header from substitute Jonathan Legear before Standard replied in similar fashion through Dieumerci Mbokani. The visitors survived the last nine minutes with 10 men following the expulsion of Tomislav Mikulic for two yellow cards. The second leg was a much-interrupted, foul-ridden affair, decided by Axel Witsel's 40th-minute penalty for a foul on Mbokani by Victor Bernardez.

Under Laszlo Boloni, the Romanian who was voted coach of the season, Standard underwent something of an endurance test since they also featured strongly in Europe, taking Liverpool all the way in the Champions League in a gallant bid to reach the group stages. With Witsel such an inspiration in midfield that he was voted best Belgian player of the year, they drew 0-0 in Liege and only lost 1-0 at Anfield.

Entering the UEFA Cup, Standard confirmed their newly established reputation as worthy opponents by winning a difficult group that included Sevilla, Sampdoria, Stuttgart and Partizan Belgrade. Having subsequently eliminated Everton, Standard then somewhat surprisingly went out to Braga in Portugal.

COACH OF THE YEAR
LASZLO BOLONI (Standard)
Displayed fantastic vision and ability to motivate players in the process of guiding Standard to a successful defence of the title.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
MILAN JOVANOVIC (Standard)
Not only scored some decisive goals but provided wholehearted support that galvanised his team-mates, especially the younger ones.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
TOM DE SUTTER (Anderlecht)
Adjusted well to Anderlecht's style of play following his move from Cercle Brugge, scoring nine goals to take his new club to the brink of the title.

Standard bearer...skipper Steven Defour hoists the championship trophy

Belgium's first two representatives in the new Europa League will be Club Brugge and Gent, who can look back on a fantastic campaign under Michel Preud'homme. The previous season he had taken Standard to their first title in 25 years before leaving the Stade Maurice Dufrasne in somewhat mysterious circumstances.

Genk's consolation for dropping out of the title race was to capture the Cup with a 2-0 win in the Final over Mechelen, whose chances receded with the 28th-minute dismissal of Jeroen Mellemans for bringing down Marvin Ogunjimi. The former Mechelen youth-team player responded with the two goals that gave Genk their third triumph in the knockout competition.

Mons, fast becoming the country's yo-yo club, and promoted Tubize languished some way below the rest and were relegated to the second division automatically. In order to preserve their status, Roeselare and Dender, who finished immediately above the doomed pair, were forced to participate in end-of-season play-offs along with Lierse and Antwerp, who had finished behind second-tier champions St Truiden.

Colombian striker Jaime Alfonso Ruiz, who plays for unfashionable Westerlo, headed the scoring charts with just 17 goals – the lowest total since 1973.

Next season the first division will contain 16 teams instead of 18, with the champions and European berths to be decided by controversial play-offs at the end of the season. Sceptics have come out in force to vent their anger at the new formula, insisting that no good will come from the scheme.

Nicholas Harling

FIRST DIVISION - FINAL

Anderlecht*	34	24	5	5	75	30	77
Standard*	34	24	5	5	66	26	77
Club Brugge	34	18	5	11	59	50	59
Gent	34	17	8	9	67	42	59
Z Waregem	34	16	7	11	55	36	55
Westerlo	34	15	7	12	42	38	52
Lokeren	34	13	12	9	40	32	51
Genk	34	15	5	14	48	51	50
Cercle Brugge	34	14	5	15	48	53	47
Mechelen	34	12	10	12	46	52	46
Mouscron	34	12	8	14	42	49	44
Charleroi	34	12	7	15	43	48	43
G Beerschot	34	11	9	14	44	42	42
Kortrijk	34	9	11	14	37	55	38
Dender	34	9	8	17	44	58	35
Roeselare	34	8	6	20	33	59	30
Tubize	34	7	6	21	35	77	27
Mons	34	3	10	21	31	57	19

*Standard won title play-off

GREECE Olympiakos do double again

Keeping it safe...Nikopolidis scores the winning penalty in the Cup Final

SUPER LEAGUE - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	30	22	5	3	50	14	71
PAOK	30	18	9	3	39	16	63
Panathinaikos	30	17	10	3	51	18	61
AEK	30	14	13	3	40	24	55
Larisa	30	12	13	5	36	26	49
Aris	30	13	8	9	30	31	47
Xanthi	30	9	11	10	25	21	38
Panionios	30	10	7	13	40	40	37
Ergotelis	30	9	9	12	31	39	36
Panthrakikos	30	9	6	15	23	37	33
Asteras	30	7	12	11	33	31	33
Iraklis	30	8	9	13	22	38	33
Levadiakos	30	9	5	16	28	36	32
OFI	30	5	9	16	30	50	24
Panserraikos	30	5	9	16	19	45	24
Thrasyvoulos	30	3	5	22	22	53	14

IT WAS business as usual in the Super League as Olympiakos were once again crowned champions with ease, finishing eight points ahead of second-place PAOK from Salonica.

But if the league provided few surprises, the Cup Final turned out to be a match to remember.

Olympiakos completed their fourth consecutive domestic double by beating arch-rivals AEK 15-14 on penalties after it had finished 4-4 at the end of extra-time.

The marathon match, one of the most exciting in Greek Cup history, went to a shoot-out when AEK's Argentinian midfielder Ignacio Scocco scored his second goal of the game in the 107th minute to cancel out countryman Luciano Galletti's 102nd-minute strike for Olympiakos.

Even Galletti's initial joy had been short-lived as, after taking his shirt off in celebration, he was shown his second yellow card and immediately dismissed. Two minutes later, Olympiakos were down to nine men as defender Avraam Papadopoulos was shown his second yellow for foul play.

AEK had taken a 2-0 half-time lead with two goals from Argentinian striker Ismael Blanco, who scored in the 4th and 8th minutes, but Olympiakos fought back and forced the game into extra-time with replies from Matt Derbyshire, on loan from English Premier League side Blackburn Rovers, and Brazilian midfielder Dudu.

Derbyshire then added his second in the 93rd minute to cancel out Scocco's first goal for AEK in the first minute of extra-time.

Almost 50,000 spectators in the Olympic Stadium in Athens witnessed an extraordinary penalty shoot-out which lasted for a total of 34 kicks, with players from both sides having to take two each until Olympiakos keeper Antonios Nikopolidis finally took matters into his own hands – the 37-year-old first saving Agustin Pelletieri's kick and then firing home the winning penalty himself.

Despite their domestic successes, however, Olympiakos opted not to renew the contract of coach Ernesto Valverde at the end of the season. Failure to qualify for the Champions League, followed by an early exit from the UEFA Cup, counted against the Spaniard getting a new deal.

While Olympiakos made it 12 titles in the last 13 years, the big two from Athens – Panathinaikos and AEK – failed to live up to expectations.

Despite a commendable effort by veteran coach Dusan Bajevic, internal problems ripped AEK apart once again, while Panathinaikos often played well in derby games but lost twice to teams such as Ergotelis of Crete.

Meanwhile, PAOK, who were on the verge of financial collapse last season, picked up all the necessary points against the smaller clubs to take second spot.

"If someone were to tell me that we would pass both Panathinaikos and AEK in the standings, both of whom have much greater budgets then us, I wouldn't have believed it," said coach Fernando Santos.

Larisa, who finished fifth under coach Marinos Ouzounidis, will be involved in next season's Europa League after a run of 18 games with just one defeat. They even beat Olympiakos in Piraeus for the first time in 26 years.

OFI, Panserraikos and Thrasyvoulos were relegated and will be replaced next season by Atromitos, PAS Giannina and Kavala.

Lou Economopoulos

Loan star...England Under-21 international Derbyshire

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
LUCIANO GALLETTI (Olympiakos)
Joint-top scorer spot in the league with AEK's Ismael Blanco, his key goals, outstanding midfield play and good character helped his side to yet another title.

COACH OF THE SEASON
DUSAN BAJEVIC (AEK)
Guided AEK to the Cup Final despite administrative chaos at the club.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
MATT DERBYSHIRE (Olympiakos)
Came off the substitutes' bench to help his side out of some tough spots towards the end of the season. His performance in the Cup Final will live long in the memory.

HOLLAND AZ make history

Foot race...Twente's Blaise Kufo holds off Niklas Moisander and an AZ posse during the top-of-the-table game in Enschede

EREDIVISIE - FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AZ	34	25	5	4	66	22	80
Twente	34	20	9	5	62	31	69
Ajax	34	21	5	8	74	41	68
PSV	34	19	8	7	71	33	65
Heerenveen	34	17	9	8	66	57	60
Groningen	34	17	5	12	53	36	56
Feyenoord	34	12	9	13	54	48	45
NAC	34	13	6	15	44	54	45
Utrecht	34	11	11	12	41	44	44
Vitesse	34	11	10	13	41	48	43
NEC	34	9	15	10	41	40	42
Willem II	34	10	7	17	35	58	37
Sparta	34	9	8	17	46	66	35
Den Haag	34	8	8	18	41	58	32
Heracles	34	7	11	16	35	53	32
Roda JC	34	7	9	18	38	59	30
De Graafschap	34	7	9	18	24	58	30
Volendam	34	7	8	19	38	67	29

FOR THE first time in 50 years none of Holland's big three (Ajax, PSV and Feyenoord) finished in either of the league's top two spots. Back in 1959 Sparta Rotterdam and Rapid JC (a predecessor of Roda JC) took the glory; now it is AZ and Twente who have shaken up the old guard.

AZ, who won their first title 28 years ago, clinched a second crown after a run of 28 games without defeat. Coach Louis Van Gaal gelled a bunch of talented youngsters into a hard-to-beat collective, but the big question is what will happen next season now he has signed a contract at Bayern Munich?

COACH OF THE SEASON
LOUIS VAN GAAL (AZ)
Last year he almost resigned, but the players persuaded him to stay. This season he created a solid team with many individual talents and won his sixth championship (after three at Ajax, two at Barcelona).
PLAYER OF THE SEASON
MOUNIR EL HAMDAOUI (AZ)
Dutch-born Morocco striker combined vast individual skills with prolific goalscoring to top the league charts with 23 goals.
NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
ELJERO ELIA (Twente)
A reserve at Den Haag two years ago, now a target for many foreign clubs. Blossomed first under Fred Rutten and later Steve McClaren. Speedy and skilful winger who can score goals as well.

Will his disciples follow his example and abandon ship or will they stay on board?

The Alkmaar club are not the only ones deserving of praise and much credit should also go to Twente, who have made the Champions League qualifiers for the second season running. When coach Fred Rutten left for an unsuccessful spell at Schalke, chairman Joop Munsterman put in a call to Steve McClaren and, to his surprise, the former England manager accepted the job. His appointment drew a mixed reception – at first the feeling was that an Englishman in Enschede would be an awkward choice – but McClaren adapted quickly.

Despite losing Orlando Engelaar and Karim El Ahmadi, McClaren cleverly continued Rutten's good work and their replacements – Theo Janssen, Cheik Tiote and Kenneth Perez – proved instant hits. So were the performances

"Now Van Gaal is to join Bayern Munich will his disciples jump ship or stay?"

of youngsters Eljero Elia and Marko Arnautovic, whose breakthrough McClaren was largely responsible for.

McClaren hoped to crown his first Dutch season with a trophy, but Twente lost the Cup Final to Heerenveen on penalties after a 2-2 draw. Youssouf Hersi scored for Twente in the 118th

Champion finish...Van Gaal

minute to set up the shoot-out, but then missed the decisive penalty.

Ajax finished third, despite having the most expensive forwards in the league, and inconsistency cost them dearly – leading ultimately to the departure of coach Marco Van Basten.

PSV also failed to deliver by finishing fourth. Former player Huub Stevens was not the right person to mastermind a record fifth consecutive title and the club's South American players, in particular, had a problem with his tough-guy image.

Half the Eredivisie teams replaced their coach during the season, though two of them stepped down to concentrate on their managerial duties.

Feyenoord, who fired Gertjan Verbeek halfway through the campaign, suffered 13 league defeats including reverses against all of the bottom four. However, under caretaker Leon Vlemmings they rose to seventh, which was good enough to compete with Groningen, NAC and Utrecht for a Europa League ticket.

Heerenveen, already certain of European football, will now skip the preliminary rounds after winning the Cup. The Frisian club had a good season, although laid-back coach Trond Sollied almost lost his job. Their star was Croatian Danijel Pranjic, who scored 16 goals and has attracted the interest of clubs from wealthier leagues.

At the bottom Volendam, last year's second division champions, were relegated for the ninth time – a Dutch record – and will be replaced by Venlo, who dropped down last year.

Heracles and Den Haag inched out of trouble on the last day of the season, leaving De Graafschap and Roda JC to enter the play-offs against six second-division teams.

Roda's win at Feyenoord, which lifted them off the bottom, was about the only good news in a disastrous season for the Kerkrade club.

Heavily in debt, they announced a merger with second-division neighbours Fortuna Sittard, who are also in dire financial straits. Much to the disapproval of both teams' fans, a new club – to be called Sporting Limburg – was set to play at Roda's Parkstad Limburg stadium. However, the provincial government of Limburg withdrew their proposed £5million backing because Fortuna had not cleared their debts as agreed.

The supporters were delighted but both clubs now face uncertain futures and it is possible professional football in Holland's coal-mining region has come to an end. ●

Klaas-Jan Droppert

SCOTLAND Old Firm battle to the end

On their way...Kyle Lafferty (right) celebrates opening the scoring for Rangers at Dundee United on the last day of the season

PREMIER LEAGUE - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	38	26	8	4	77	28	86
Celtic	38	24	10	4	80	33	82
Hearts	38	16	11	11	40	37	59
Aberdeen	38	14	11	13	41	40	53
Dundee Utd	38	13	14	11	47	50	53
Hibernian	38	11	14	13	42	46	47
Motherwell	38	13	9	16	46	51	48
Kilmarnock	38	12	8	18	38	48	44
Hamilton	38	12	5	21	30	53	41
Falkirk	38	9	11	18	37	52	38
St Mirren	38	9	10	19	33	52	37
Inverness	38	10	7	21	37	58	37

WHILE THE dominance of Rangers and Celtic afforded the season a familiar pattern, the campaign had enough twists and turns to keep things interesting until the death, with added spice supplied by a tight contest for third spot between Aberdeen, Dundee United and a rejuvenated Hearts.

For the first half of the season Celtic looked well on course to achieving a fourth successive title, establishing themselves in the driving seat in November with a maximum 18 points from six games, while Rangers contrived to drop seven points in the same period, allowing the Hoops to open up a seven-point gap.

It was not until January that the pendulum began to swing the other way as Celtic twice failed to defend a lead at home to Dundee United, drawing 2-2, before suffering a 4-2 defeat at Aberdeen. Rangers, meanwhile, took a point from their own trip to Pittodrie and won their other three games to close the gap to a point.

Rangers' momentum was maintained in February, while Celtic's patchy form continued as they went 240 minutes without a goal, racking up three successive draws. By the time the floodgates opened, with a 7-0 rout of St Mirren – which included the goal of the season from Barcelona recruit Marc Crosas and a hat-trick from Shunsuke Nakamura – it was not enough to prevent the Gers from taking top spot with a superior goal difference.

In March, however, Rangers looked as if they might self-implode, going down to a first-ever home defeat to Inverness Caledonian Thistle, courtesy of an Ian Black penalty, and then ceding a 2-0 lead in their next game at Ibrox to Hearts. It was enough of a blip for Celtic to regain pole position.

The renaissance at Hearts was arguably one of the tales of the season and, along with Edinburgh rivals Hibs, they played kingmaker more than once throughout the campaign, regularly taking points off the Old Firm duo.

In April, Rangers' decision to sideline two of their most influential players, captain Barry Ferguson and keeper Allan McGregor, following some disgraceful antics on international duty was morally laudable but looked a high-risk tactic in terms of their title challenge. Instead, it appeared to galvanise the squad as they eked out a series of 1-0 victories, gaining maximum points from four games. With Celtic also on a winning run, it was left, once more, to Hearts to have their say, holding the champions 1-1 at home.

Hearts played kingmaker more than once, regularly taking points off the Old Firm duo

In the final month, inconsistency from both Glasgow sides saw top spot change hands three times and ensured the need for a helicopter carrying the trophy to be deployed in the skies on the final day of the season.

Hibs played a big part in the crescendo of tension, restricting each in turn to a point at Easter Road.

Inevitably, the key match proved to be the final Old Firm derby of the season, when a Steven Davis strike at Ibrox secured all three points for Rangers. It meant they went into the final day of the season with a two-point cushion – and a 3-0 victory at Dundee United, coupled with Celtic's inability to breakdown Hearts at Parkhead, saw Walter Smith's side confirmed as champions.

At the other end of the table, newcomers Hamilton Academical – shoo-ins for instant relegation at the start of the season – defied the odds to stay up. Instead, Inverness Caley, for so long a thorn in the side of the bigger teams, and despite the inspirational presence of Terry Butcher who was wheeled in halfway through the season, went down on the last day.

Dan Brennan

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
STEVEN DAVIS (Rangers)
A worthy choice as players' player of the season.

COACH OF THE SEASON
WALTER SMITH (Rangers)
Turned around a season that began with European debacle to restore domestic bragging rights to Ibrox after a three-year hiatus.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
CSABA LASZLO (Hearts)
The garrulous and eccentric Romanian-born Hungarian transformed Hearts on the pitch, while charming a sceptical media.

They shall not pass...Hearts keeper Marian Kello keeps Celtic at bay

ENGLAND

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
WAYNE ROONEY (Man United)
Versatile, hard-working and increasingly tactically aware, the Liverpool-born forward is fast maturing into Europe's leading striker.

COACH OF THE SEASON
ROY HODGSON (Fulham)
A rarity in the Premier League: an Englishman guiding a modest club into Europe – in this case following Fulham's best-ever league position of seventh.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
FEDERICO MACHEDA
(Man United)
The Italian teenager made an instant impact on the league title race with crucial match-winning goals against Aston Villa and Sunderland.

GERMANY

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
EDIN DZEKO (Wolfsburg)
A wonderful mixture of power and subtlety, the exceptional Bosnia striker was most responsible for his club's post-Christmas surge, scoring 21 of his 26 goals after the winter break.

COACH OF THE SEASON
FELIX MAGATH (Wolfsburg)
Steering Bayern to back-to-back doubles in 2004-05 and 2005-06 was no mean feat, but transforming Wolfsburg from provincial underachievers into champions in less than two years has to rate as the highlight of his career to date.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
NEVEN SUBOTIC (Dortmund)
The rangy Serbia centre-back with a US passport settled in right away after moving from second-division Mainz, adding steel to a previously porous rearguard and proving a handful at the other end of the pitch, too.

ALBANIA

Tirana's record title

Stars in stripes...Tirana celebrate a record league triumph

AFTER a close-fought campaign, Tirana secured a record 24th championship, beating second-place Vllaznia 2-1 on the final day with goals from veteran captain Devis Mukaj and Migen Memelli.

"It was the most important goal of my career," said Mukaj, while Memelli won the season's golden shoe as leading goalscorer.

It was by no means an easy season for the champions. In the middle of the campaign their coach Blaz Sliskovic was fired and replaced by club legend Agustin Kola, who in turn resigned after the club lost in the Cup Final to Flamurtari.

It was left to Alban Tafaj to finally guide the team towards the title and the post-match celebrations culminated in state president Bamir Topi, a former club president of Tirana, inviting the team to his official residence.

Vllaznia had led the table for a large part of the season but the pressure told after experienced coach Agim Cana quit in mid-season.

Last year's champions Dinamo were inconsistent and finished third, while the country's most popular team, Partizani, were forced into a relegation play-off with second-tier Kastrioti.

Elbasani, champions in 2006, finished bottom and were relegated.

Flamurtari's 2-1 Cup Final victory over Tirana was their third success in the competition and confirmed their reputation for nurturing young talent. The latest players to come through are Franc Veliu and two 19-year-olds, goalkeeper Shpetim Mocka and forward Hair Zeqiri, who scored the winning goal in the Final.

Gezim Nushi

SUPERLIGA - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tirana	33	19	11	3	58	27	68
Vllaznia	33	19	7	7	49	29	64
Dinamo	33	14	10	9	48	34	52
Teuta	33	12	8	13	32	34	44
Shkumbini	33	12	8	13	32	38	44
Flamurtari	33	10	12	11	33	33	42
Besa	33	10	10	13	31	41	40
Apolonia	33	11	5	17	36	43	38
Bylis	33	9	10	14	28	38	37
Partizani	33	9	9	15	27	36	36
Lushnja	33	8	12	13	25	35	36
Elbasani	33	7	14	12	28	39	35

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
ANSI AGOLLI (Tirana)
The midfielder was the key figure in Tirana's title triumph.

COACH OF THE YEAR
SULEJMAN STAROVA (Teuta)
Steered his young team to fourth place in the league.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
FRANC VELIU (Flamurtari)
The Under-21 defender's displays attracted interest from a number of foreign clubs.

BOSNIA End to ethnic divisions

FOR THE first time in 15 years of the Bosnian Premier League, there were no ethnic incidents at games this season.

In the past, the supporters of teams representing the country's three ethnic groups – Bosnians (mostly Muslim), Serbs (orthodox church) and Croatians (Catholic church) – have clashed, with referees often helping teams from their own nationality.

The success of the national team under Ciro Blazevic has helped clubs to rise above these divisions and there were fewer refereeing controversies, but the quality of the football has declined.

There were still some controversial incidents, though mostly when clubs of the same nationality met. The most notable of these was in Banja Luka on the penultimate weekend of the season, when Borac played Slavija from eastern (Serbian) Sarajevo. After the match had ended 1-1 the home supporters, angry with the referee, ran onto the pitch and tried to attack the official, who escaped to his dressing room.

Borac had been in contention for one of three European places but the draw ended their hopes and the supporters' frustration got the better of them. The club were ordered to play three matches behind closed doors as punishment.

The championship race was dominated by Zrinjski from Mostar – who won the title for the second time, four years after their first triumph – and owed much to the shrewd work of coach Dragan Jovic.

The season was also significant for the revival in fortunes of famous old clubs Sloboda and Sarajevo.

Meanwhile, the biggest surprise was the success of Slavija, who finished second and also reached the Cup Final. Their key player, Darko Spalevic, was league top scorer with 15 goals. The biggest disappointment was Modrica, last season's champions, who only just escaped relegation.

Zdravko Reic

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
VELIBOR DURIC (Zrinjski)
Midfielder who enjoyed his best season with his club and played his way into the national side.

COACH OF THE SEASON
DRAGAN JOVIC (Zrinjski)
Bright young coach who turned Zrinjski into champions.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
DALIBOR PANDZA (Sarajevo)
Fast and direct young forward who turned down Croatia in the hope of being called up by Bosnia.

PREMIER LEAGUE - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zrinjski	30	18	3	9	50	37	57
Slavija	30	15	7	8	36	28	52
Sloboda	30	15	5	10	32	26	50
Sarajevo	30	14	7	9	43	30	49
Borac	30	15	4	11	45	26	49
Siroki Brijeg	30	14	3	13	47	38	45
Zvijezda	30	11	10	9	43	38	43
Laktasi	30	12	6	12	43	39	42
Zeljeznicar	30	13	3	14	30	35	42
Celik	30	12	5	13	30	32	41
Leotar	30	12	3	15	32	43	39
Velez	30	11	4	15	42	45	37
Travnik	30	11	4	15	38	53	37
Modrica	30	10	7	13	37	41	37
Orasje	30	9	7	14	33	43	34
Posusje	30	5	8	17	31	58	23

CYPRUS APOEL win again

APOEL CLAIMED a record 20th championship with three games to spare ahead of big-spending Omonia and headline-grabbing Anorthosis, who had stolen all the limelight earlier in the season with their breathtaking run in the Champions League.

Nicosia derby...APOEL (in yellow) take on Omonia

Anorthosis recorded surprise wins over Rapid Wien and Olympiakos in the qualifying rounds before beating Panathinaikos, and drawing with Internazionale and Werder Bremen, in the group stage.

There was also European success for Omonia, who beat AEK Athens in the UEFA Cup.

However, it was unfancied APOEL who led the way in the league, winning all three of their league games against closest rivals Omonia, who invested heavily last summer on a number of high-profile players such as former Red Star Belgrade defender Aleksandar Pantic, Cyprus striker Efstathios Aloneftis, national team captain Yiannis Okkas and Romania striker Claudiu Niculescu.

Omonia reinforced in the January transfer window with the addition of Cyprus' all-time leading scorer Michalis Konstantinou from Iraklis, but they failed to overtake APOEL and coach Nedim Dudic was sacked before the end-of-season play-offs and replaced by Takis Lemonis.

APOEL also won a crucial meeting with Anorthosis in March, with Anorthosis coach Temuri Ketsbaia resigning – officially for family reasons – shortly afterwards.

Key players for APOEL were Poland internationals Marcin Zewlakow and Kamil Kosowski, Portuguese striker Nuno Morais (formerly of Chelsea) and Cyprus stars Constantinos Charalambidis and Marinos Satsias.

APOP were surprise winners of the Cup, beating AEL in the Final after overcoming Omonia and APOEL. The team was only formed six years ago following the merger of APOP Peyias and Kinyras Empas.

Bottom club Atrimotos were joined by AEK and Alki in being relegated to leave Larnaca without a top-flight club.

John Holmesdale

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
SERJAO (Doxa)
After four years in Portugal, the Brazilian moved to Doxa last summer and was the league's top goalscorer.

COACH OF THE SEASON
IVAN JOVANOVIC (APOEL)
The 46-year-old Serb steered APOEL to the Cypriot title in a previous spell in charge (2003-4) and worked his magic again.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
HAWAR MULLA MOHAMMED (Anorthosis)
The intelligence and delicate skills of the Iraqi attacking midfielder shone like a beacon, both on the domestic stage and in the Champions League.

FIRST DIVISION - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL	26	22	3	1	53	14	69
Omonia	26	21	1	4	61	18	64
Anorthosis	26	20	2	4	49	19	62
AEL	26	13	4	9	34	30	43
Apollon	26	13	4	9	53	34	43
APOP	26	12	4	10	35	35	40
Ethnikos	26	11	7	8	34	33	40
Doxa	26	8	7	11	37	39	31
AEP	26	5	12	9	30	38	27
Enosis	26	6	7	13	23	43	25
APEP	26	5	8	13	28	44	23
Alki	26	4	7	15	27	50	19
AEK	26	3	6	17	27	45	15
Atromitos	26	1	4	21	19	69	7

PLAY-OFFS

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL	32	26	4	2	62	17	82
Omonia	32	25	1	6	70	22	76
Anorthosis	32	21	4	7	52	26	67
AEL	32	13	5	14	38	41	44

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Apollon	32	17	6	9	68	42	57
Ethnikos	32	13	8	11	47	45	47
APOP*	32	13	6	13	45	49	39
Doxa	32	10	8	14	46	51	38

* APOP had 6 points deducted

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEP	32	7	15	10	39	44	36
Enosis	32	8	8	16	27	51	32
APEP	32	7	10	15	33	51	31
Alki	32	6	9	17	39	59	27

GEORGIA WIT win war-torn campaign

FOOTBALL IN Georgia last season was overshadowed by politics as armed conflict in South Ossetia last August threatened the start of the championship.

Spartaki Tskhinvali, from South Ossetia, and Gagra, from the other breakaway republic of Abkhazia, had looked unlikely to compete but both eventually took part. However, they lacked proper training facilities and it was little surprise they were eventually relegated.

Elsewhere, the conflict forced the national team to kick off their home World Cup qualifiers against the Republic of Ireland in Mainz, Germany, while WIT abandoned plans to play their UEFA Cup home leg against Austria Wien in Turkey, switching instead to a single match in Vienna.

When the clouds of war cleared, 11 clubs contested the league championship. WIT, who last won the title five years ago, clinched the silverware after a run of 26 matches without defeat. Nicknamed the Vets after their American sponsor, a pet food manufacturer, they were the most consistent team throughout the season and their victory was all the most impressive because they played the whole campaign in Gori, the birthplace of Stalin, while their Amazi stadium in Tbilisi, 76km away, was being upgraded.

WIT's key players – defender Aleksandr Kvakhadze, midfielders Luka Razmadze and Giga Bechvaia, and forward Irakli Klimiashvili – were all products of the club's academy.

Last season's champions Dinamo Tbilisi finished second, their German coach Reiner Zobel having taken the reins from Czech Dusan Uhrin, who was dismissed in March after a draw with outsiders Spartaki.

Dinamo's squad, packed with foreigners, started the campaign in disastrous fashion by losing to Gagra and Lokomotivi. Their hopes vanished when Slovak defender Milos Krsko broke a leg and forward Mate Vatsadze injured his collarbone.

Olimpi Rustavi, champions in 2007, will represent Georgia in the Europa League after clinching third place. In the crucial game they won away at Lokomotivi thanks to a double from experienced striker Georgi Megreladze.

Lokomotivi Tbilisi were definitely the biggest disappointment of the season. They signed the experienced Georgi Lomaia from Spartak Moscow, Levan Tskitishvili, formerly with Wolfsburg, and Rati Alexidze (ex-Chelsea) but could manage only sixth place.

Spartaki lost their place in the top flight on the final day of the season after losing to closest rivals Meskheti. Borjomi, who were thrashed by Dinamo Tbilisi 12-0 on the same day, were also relegated, along with Gagra.

Oleg Zadernovsky

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
NIKOLOZ GELASHVILI (Zestafoni)
Powerful striker who proved his worth by scoring 20 league goals.

COACH OF THE SEASON
NESTOR MUMLADZE (WIT)
The 53-year-old won the title in his fourth season at the club thanks to a strong defence that conceded only 19 goals.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
IRAKLI KLIMIASHVILI (WIT)
Small, energetic forward who broke into the national team at 21.

UMAGLESI LIGA - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
WIT	30	20	9	1	57	19	69
Dinamo	30	19	6	5	70	21	63
Olimpi	30	16	9	5	40	20	57
Zestafoni	30	16	4	10	43	27	52
Sioni	30	11	11	8	35	29	44
Lokomotivi	30	10	8	12	35	33	38
Mglebi	30	10	6	14	36	41	36
Meskheti	30	7	8	15	23	42	29
Gagra	30	7	7	16	23	48	28
Spartaki	30	6	7	17	28	46	25
Borjomi	30	2	7	21	21	85	13

MALTA Hibs hold on to seal victory

IN ONE OF the most exciting finales to a Maltese season, Hibernians won the title after clashing with defending champions Valletta on the last day.

Before a full house at the national stadium, Hibs collected the point they needed with a goalless draw to clinch their first championship since 2002.

Hibernians, the club from Paola and known as the Paolites, had led the table for most of the season but saw their comfortable lead slip away in the final weeks of the campaign.

Valletta were closing in on top spot until they surprisingly lost 2-1 to Marsaxlokk in the penultimate round of matches. At the same time Hibernians recovered their poise to beat Birkirkara 4-0 and leave themselves within touching distance of their 10th title.

Despite picking up an injury which kept him out of the starting line-up against Valletta, national team striker Terence Scerri finished the league's top scorer with 26 goals.

"This title belongs to the entire community of Hibernians and Paola, and to all those who put up so much hard work to get what we really wanted," said Hibernians coach Mark Miller.

His team finished the season as the most entertaining, scoring 73 goals in 28 matches, while runners-up Valletta, conceded the least number of goals (18) and suffered the fewest number of defeats (two, both of which came away from home) compared with Hibernians' four. Valletta also kept a clean sheet 15 times, compared to Hibernians' 12. Valletta, however, did not deliver when it really mattered and major changes in both management and the playing squad can be expected next season.

At the other end of the table, Tarxien Rainbows, propelled by 23 goals from Brazilian striker Daniel Mariano Bueno, finished with the same head-to-head record as Msida. Tarxien won a special play-off against Msida, who went down with Hamrun Spartans.

They were replaced by Dingli Swallows, who will make their debut in the top flight nest season, and Vittoriosa Stars.

Domenic Aquilina

Perfect 10...Hibernians skipper and goalkeeper Mario Muscat leads the celebrations

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
TERENCE SCERRI (Hibernians)
His 26 goals were a key factor in the club's title success.

COACH OF THE SEASON
MARK MILLER (Hibernians)
The former Malta Under-21 coach took over in September and never looked back.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
DANIEL MARIANO BUENO (Tarxien Rainbows)
The Brazilian took Maltese football by storm in his first season since moving from the Czech Republic.

PREMIER LEAGUE - FINAL

Championship Play-Off

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hibernians	28	19	5	4	73	25	42
Valletta	28	17	9	2	51	18	40
Birkirkara	28	12	7	9	43	45	27
Marsaxlokk	28	10	6	12	46	52	25
Sliema	28	10	8	10	33	41	25
Floriana	28	7	6	15	25	44	16

Relegation Play-Offs

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qormi	24	7	6	11	30	31	20
Msida	24	7	5	12	29	40	16
Tarxien	24	6	5	13	32	44	16
Hamrun	24	7	3	14	31	48	16

MOLDOVA Sheriff lay down law again

IN ONE of the best seasons in the country's short history, Sheriff of Tiraspol won the championship for the ninth year in succession and beat runners-up Dacia in the Cup Final.

Sheriff's double was their second in a row and made it a hat-trick of trophies for the year following January's triumph in the Commonwealth Cup, the tournament for the champions of former Soviet states.

According to Sheriff's Belarussian coach Leonid Kuchuk: "Our secret is very simple – we count each draw as a defeat, and if we lose any game we count it as catastrophe."

Sheriff's squad includes 15 foreigners from 10 different countries, including the league's outstanding player, Burkina Faso midfielder Wilfred Benjamin Balima.

Sheriff will now enter next season's Champions League at the second qualifying round stage, while Dacia, Iskra-Stal (the surprise of the season who finished in third place – the highest position in their history) and fourth-placed Zimbru will compete in the Europa League.

Zimbru, overtaken by Sheriff as the dominant force in Moldovan football, had a difficult season with many experienced players departing the club, leaving them mostly with teenagers from the youth system.

Given the circumstances, fourth place was probably the best that Zimbru could achieve, though 18-year-old Oleg Andronic, the league's top goalscorer, was the discovery of the season.

Miron Goihman

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
WILFRED BENJAMIN BALIMA (Sheriff)
The Burkina Faso midfielder was hugely influential in his side's title success.

COACH OF THE SEASON
LEONID KUCHUK (Sheriff)
The 49-year-old Belorussian has led Sheriff for the past six seasons.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
OLEG ANDRONIC (Zimbru)
The teenage forward topped the scoring charts with 16 goals.

Glory...Sherif skipper Vazha Tarkhnishvili picks up more silverware

NATIONAL DIVISION - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheriff	30	25	3	2	61	15	78
Dacia	30	20	3	7	47	17	63
Iskra-Stal	30	14	10	6	28	15	52
Zimbru	30	13	7	10	42	30	46
D Bender	30	11	9	10	42	45	42
Olimpia Balti	30	11	7	12	30	32	40
Tiraspol	30	9	5	16	30	36	32
Nistru	30	8	6	16	30	43	30
CSCA-Rapid	30	7	8	15	28	47	29
Tiligul	30	7	4	19	24	60	25
Academia	30	6	6	18	27	49	24

NORTHERN IRELAND Linfield lose out

IT TOOK just 12 days to end Linfield's vice-like grip on the major trophies and crush their dreams of landing a fourth successive double.

First, David Jeffrey's charges lost a dramatic Cup semi-final replay to Belfast rivals Cliftonville, then, in one of the closest title races for years, they lost their league crown to Glentoran on the last day of the season.

The new 12-team format, which saw a reduction from the 16 of previous years, brought a general improvement in standards but the key games in the title race were the three meetings between Glentoran and Linfield.

Seven thousand fans at the Oval saw Glentoran regain the leadership at the beginning of March with a 2-0 win. A fortnight later, Linfield kept themselves in the hunt by winning the return 1-0 with a goal from summer signing Paul Munster at Windsor Park.

But it was the final meeting, on April 10 at the Oval, which provided the pivotal moment. Linfield took the lead through Munster, only for Michael Halliday's injury-time equaliser to keep Glentoran one point ahead with four games to play. It was a lead the Glens would maintain to the end.

Although Linfield thrashed third-placed Crusaders 5-0 at Seaview on the final day, Glentoran clinched their first championship since 2005 with a 3-1 home win over Cliftonville.

Glens boss Alan McDonald, the former Northern Ireland and QPR defender, showed excellent leadership qualities in his second season as a manager, while captain Paul Leeman, strikers Halliday and Gary Hamilton, midfielder Daryl Fordyce and defender Colin Nixon were all impressive.

In the Cup, Cliftonville beat Linfield 3-2 in a thrilling semi-final but lost in the Final to north Belfast rivals Crusaders, the only goal coming from postman and former Linfield striker Mark Dickson.

The Cup win – Crusaders' first since 1968 – was a fitting reward for an excellent season under resourceful manager Stephen Baxter.

Leading his side into fourth spot and the Europa League was not enough to save long-serving Lisburn manager Paul Kirk, who was replaced by former Glenavon boss Jimmy Brown.

It was a disappointing season for ambitious Coleraine, under manager Davy Platt, and Ballymena United, who had looked certain relegation candidates until boss Roy Walker pulled them to safety.

And it all turned sour for promoted Bangor as financial problems meant they didn't apply for a Premiership licence for next season. They finished second from bottom on points but were placed 12th and will be replaced by Championship winners Portadown.

Dungannon Swifts retained their Premiership place after losing 2-1 away and winning 1-0 at home against west Belfast side Donegal Celtic in the promotion-relegation play-off.

Roy Kitson

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
CHRIS SCANNELL (Cliftonville)
The 31-year-old scored 18 goals.

COACH OF THE SEASON
STEPHEN BAXTER (Crusaders)
Led his side to Cup Final victory.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
MARTIN DONNELLY (Crusaders)
The ex-Sheffield United winger possesses speed and technique.

www.inpho.ie
Glens hero...Michael Halliday

PREMIERSHIP - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Glentoran	38	24	9	5	63	36	81
Linfield	38	24	8	6	69	28	80
Crusaders	38	16	14	8	63	45	62
Lisburn	38	15	11	12	53	41	56
Coleraine	38	15	6	17	46	51	51
Cliftonville	38	12	14	12	52	48	50
Institute	38	13	9	16	47	55	48
Newry	38	11	11	16	47	57	44
Glenavon	38	11	8	19	49	63	41
Ballymena	38	11	8	19	39	57	41
Bangor	38	9	9	20	42	67	36
Dungannon	38	8	11	19	49	71	35

SLOVENIA Maribor back on top

AFTER a six-year drought, Maribor – the country's most successful club with eight league titles and five cups – are champions again. They won it with three rounds to spare, scoring 62 goals in the process.

Maribor, under coach Darko Milanic and sporting manager Zlatko Zahovic, the former international star, did not really face a serious rival for the title.

Olimpija, from Ljubljana, are back in the top flight after winning the second-division title. It is a remarkable comeback for a club that went bankrupt a few years ago and was relegated to the fifth tier. Coach Primoz Gliha, a former Olimpija player, called on old team-mates such as Miran Pavlin, Mladen Rudonja, Amir Karic and Ales Ceh, who all agreed to play for nothing.

However, it was not all good news for Olimpija. Captain and leading scorer Pavlin is set to leave and they will start next season with a two-point deduction for failing to fulfil a fixture.

More heartwarming was the emergence of some new young talent and a surprise new team. Rudar, from the mining town of Velenje, finished third in their first season in the top flight to qualify for the Europa League.

Zdravko Reic

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
ZORAN PAVLOVIC (Maribor)
Champions' midfield motivator who led by example.

COACH OF THE SEASON
DARKO MILANIC (Maribor)
The former national team defender deserves full credit for his side's title triumph.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
ETIEN VELIKONJA (Gorica)
The 20-year-old striker was the league's top scorer with 17 goals and a key figure in Slovenian football's bright future.

Striking sensation...Gorica's Etien Velikonja spearheaded a wave of new young talent

1. LIGA - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maribor	36	17	12	7	62	44	63
Gorica	36	17	5	14	60	55	56
Rudar Velenje	36	16	7	13	44	39	55
Celje	36	15	8	13	48	39	53
Domzale	36	12	14	10	44	40	50
IB Ljubljana	36	13	8	15	52	51	47
Lendava	36	11	10	15	36	52	43
Drava	36	12	6	18	47	53	42
Koper	36	10	12	14	39	47	42
Primorje	36	9	14	13	36	48	41

WALES The Rhyl deal

THEY SAY money talks – and it soon became clear that the title race would be between the three best-financed clubs in the league: reigning champions Llanelli, four-times winners The New Saints and Rhyl, who won in 2004.

By the turn of the year they had started to break away from the pack but The New Saints were the first to falter, leaving Llanelli and Rhyl to dispute the crown. The latter all but clinched it following a tactically-sound 1-0 win at their rivals in the closing stages. Rhyl coach Allan Bickerstaff built on predecessor John Hulse's squad by signing midfielder Gareth Owen from Airbus UK and striker Neil Roberts from Wrexham, both of whom were key elements in their title win.

For Llanelli's Peter Nicholas, failure to retain the title was costly as his contract was not renewed. Ex-Wales midfielder Nicholas, the club's most successful manager, was as surprised as anyone else but financial restrictions played a significant role. Midfielder Andy Legg now takes the hot seat for the European campaign.

The relegation dogfight went to the wire. Caernarfon Town were condemned with weeks to go, but the second drop-spot remained up for grabs until the penultimate round, with Druids, Prestatyn Town, Neath and finally Porthmadog climbing to safety, leaving Caersws in the lurch.

Northern feeder league champions Bala are set to replace Caernarfon, but Caersws may yet be saved. Southern feeder qualifiers Aberaman have failed to upgrade their ground in time but have appealed to the FA of Wales.

Bangor City retained the Cup with a 2-0 win over Aberystwyth, while Rhys Griffiths of Llanelli took the Golden Boot for the third season running with 31 league goals.

Mel Thomas

Feeling champion...Rhyl striker Neil Roberts and goalkeeper Lee Kendall

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
GARETH OWEN (Rhyl)
The veteran midfielder's creative skills proved the mainstay of the champions' campaign and his wealth of English League experience paid off.

MANAGER OF THE SEASON
ALLAN BICKERSTAFF (Rhyl)
His shrewd close-season signings built up a side of much potential with a blend of experience and flair, and they took the title playing attractive, open football.

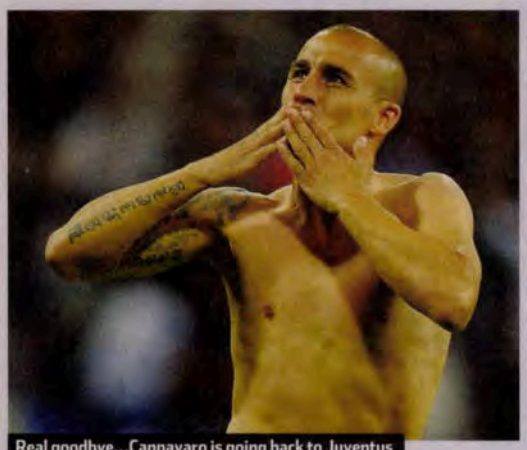
NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
LEE IDZI (Haverfordwest)
Fast-maturing young goalkeeper.

PREMIER LEAGUE - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rhyl	34	29	3	2	95	29	90
Llanelli	34	26	5	3	98	38	83
TNS	34	20	11	3	79	27	71
Carmarthen	34	19	5	10	52	47	62
Port Talbot	34	16	8	10	57	48	56
Bangor	34	16	7	11	58	40	55
Haverfordwest	34	16	7	11	53	39	55
Aberystwyth	34	12	10	12	51	50	46
Connah's Quay	34	12	5	17	49	65	41
Newtown	34	10	10	14	46	54	40
Welshpool	34	11	7	16	48	70	40
Airbus	34	12	3	19	47	57	39
Cefn Druids	34	9	7	18	57	74	34
Neath	34	10	4	20	43	65	34
Prestatyn	34	8	9	17	48	70	33
Porthmadog	34	10	2	22	57	91	32
Caersws	34	6	7	21	28	61	25
Caernarfon	34	5	8	21	32	73	20*

*Caernarfon had 3 points deducted for fielding an ineligible player

PEOPLE in the news


Real goodbye...Cannavaro is going back to Juventus

EUROPE

Juventus have re-signed FABIO CANNAVARO from Real Madrid, three years after he moved to Spain. The 35-year-old central defender signed a one-year deal with the Serie A club.

Spartak Varna's coach ANATOLI KIRILOV was killed in a car crash. The 43-year-old joined the Bulgarian club in March.

Liverpool captain STEVEN GERRARD was named Player of the Year in England by the Football Writers' Association.

Writers' choice...Gerrard

Germany's former World Cup winner LOTHAR MATTHAUS resigned as coach of Maccabi Netanya.

Real Madrid sporting director PREDRAG MIJATOVIC left the club by mutual agreement.

Bordeaux midfielder YOANN GOURCUFF was named Player of the Year in France by fellow pros.

JOHN COLLINS left his post as coach of Charleroi. He took charge at the Belgian club in December and helped them to secure their top-flight status.

VALERY GAZZAYEV was installed in the Dinamo Kyiv hot seat, replacing fellow Russian coach YURI SEMIN.

VIOREL HIZO became coach of Rapid Bucharest for a fifth time after MARIAN RADA resigned.

Aston Villa skipper and Denmark defender MARTIN LAURSEN announced his retirement due to persistent injury problems.

Sevilla double UEFA Cup-winning captain JAVI NAVARRO retired after losing a two-year battle with a knee injury.

MARIO GOMEZ, the 23-year-old Stuttgart striker, has agreed to join Bayern Munich.

Juventus have signed Brazil playmaker DIEGO from Werder Bremen for £21million. The 24-year-old agreed a five-year deal with the Italian side.

Red Star Belgrade parted company with Macedonian coach CEDOMIR JANEVSKI.

Celtic's SCOTT BROWN was named Player of the Year by the Scottish PFA, while defender GARY CALDWELL won the football writers' award.

Benfica have signed 20-year-old Brazil youth international PATRIC from Sao Caetano.

JIMMY CALDERWOOD left his post as coach of Aberdeen after the Scottish side's 2-1 victory over Hibernian clinched a place in the Europa League next season.

Turkish side Belenenses parted company with coach JAIME PACHECO. The former Porto and Sporting left-back RUI JORG replaced him for the last two games of the season.

Ujpest coach SZENTES LAZAR will leave at the end of the season. "We want to have a different approach next year and we will need a new technical team," said the Hungarian club.

Werder Bremen captain FRANK BAUMANN announced his retirement at the age of 33. He will become assistant to Bremen sporting director KLAUS ALLOFS.

Ovér...Baumann (left) and Diego

AFRICA

MUHSIN ERTUGRAL, who was sacked by Kaizer Chiefs before the final game of the season, joined Ajax Cape Town. VLADIMIR VERMEZOVIC of Serbia was appointed Chiefs' new coach.

No longer Chief...Ertugral

South Africa captain AARON MOKOENA will leave Blackburn Rovers in the summer and sign a three-year deal with another English Premier League side, Portsmouth.

Veteran OTTO PFISTER resigned as Cameroon coach on the eve of a training camp in Belgium.

Former South Africa skipper NEIL TOVEY has replaced CLIVE BARKER as coach of AmaZulu.

AMERICAS

Boca Juniors coach CARLOS ISCHIA will quit the club when the Argentinian season ends.

Tottenham Hotspur's WILSON PALACIOS missed the end of the season on compassionate grounds after the remains of his brother, who was kidnapped in 2007, were discovered in Honduras.

Fla star...Adriano

ADRIANO rejoined Flamengo after his contract with Internazionale had been cancelled in April.

ASIA

Al Shabab of UAE signed Chile attacking midfielder CARLOS VILLANUEVA on a four-year deal. The 23-year-old joined from Audax Italiano following a one-year loan spell with Blackburn Rovers.

Victory man...Hernandez

Reigning Australian champions Melbourne Victory signed Costa Rican international midfielder CARLOS HERNANDEZ on a permanent deal, following his two seasons on loan with the club from Alajuelense. He will be joined in Melboune by Chonburi defender SURAT SUKHA, who will become the first Thai to play in the A-League.

AMERICAS Mexican headache

LIBERTADORES CUP

WITH THE outbreak of swine flu in Mexico, the progress of San Luis and Guadalajara to the knockout phase of the competition gave organisers huge problems over where to play the Mexican sides' home leg of ties against Nacional of Uruguay and Sao Paulo of Brazil respectively.

Colombia and Chile were sounded out as venues, only for local authorities to block the move. The games were put back a week to buy time, and then moved back to Mexico, which by now was gradually emerging from its shutdown. However, when the South American teams refused to travel, and the competition administrators backed their stance, the two Mexican clubs withdrew in protest.

On the field, the round of 16 also bade farewell to the last representatives from Peru, Chile and Paraguay.

Universidad SMP, the first club from Peru to reach this stage of the Libertadores for five years, are an attractive, open side – albeit too open to live with Brazil's Gremio. The aerial prowess of striker Maxi Lopez was decisive in Gremio's 3-1 away win in the first leg, making the return (which Gremio won 2-0) a formality.

Much the same was true of Universidad de Chile's clash with Brazilian opposition. Cruzeiro keeper Fabio needed to be in fine form in the early stages of the first leg in Santiago but, despite the odd defensive wobble, his attractive team were well worth their 2-1 victory – which they followed up a week later with a comfortable 1-0 triumph in Belo Horizonte. Beaten Universidad coach Sergio Markarian was quick to acknowledge that his team had been outgunned in technical and physical terms.

Going through...Miguel Amado of Defensor skips past Boca's Fabian Vargas

Libertad of Paraguay are a well-organised, counter-attacking side who made an excellent start to the campaign, but their limitations when chasing the game were exposed by Estudiantes of Argentina. True, a controversial decision played a part as, already 1-0 down in Argentina, Libertad suffered the double blow of conceding a controversial penalty and a red card for left-back Miguel Samudio when it seemed that no foul had been committed. Estudiantes, undoubtedly improving under coach Alejandro Sabella, won 3-0, and Libertad could make no impression in a goalless second leg.

Estudiantes are alone in carrying the Argentinian challenge, while Brazil can boast four of the last eight.

Palmeiras came through the all-Brazilian tie against Sport Recife. The teams had also met in the group stage, and in all they produced four petulant and abrasive games with little for the purist. Both matches in the knockout round went 1-0 to the home side, before 2002 World Cup-winning keeper Marcos saw Palmeiras through with a wonderful performance in the penalty shoot-out.

Argentina's other last-16 representative Boca Juniors were surprisingly beaten by Defensor of Uruguay. Boca's defensive deficiencies in the air were shown up in the first leg in Montevideo, but coming away with a 2-2 draw appeared to have left them with one foot in the quarter-finals. In Buenos Aires, however, a superb strike from the talented Diego De Souza gave Defensor the advantage. Although Boca made all manner of attacking substitutions, their play was panicky and lacked conviction, and they were unable to find the equaliser that would have sent them through.

Estudiantes are alone in carrying the Argentinian challenge, while Brazil can boast four of the teams in the last eight

Defensor, therefore, qualify for the quarter-finals for only the second time in their history, while Caracas of Venezuela will be making their debut in the last eight.

On a waterlogged pitch they lost 2-1 away to Deportivo Cuenca of Ecuador in their first leg, but back on their own bumpy field they maintained their 100 per cent record at home with a comfortable 4-0 win. ●

Tim Vickery

Team work...Caracas players celebrate making history with a place in the quarter-finals

AMERICAS Atlante lead Mexican charge

It's ours...Atlante's Argentinian keeper and captain Federico Vilar hoists the trophy

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

THE FIRST edition of the European-style Champions League tournament was a surprising success. Although the result was the same as in previous years – three of the four semi-finalists were Mexican, as were the champions – there was much greater excitement and far more shocks than in the past.

Atlante deservedly won the tournament by beating Cruz Azul 2-0 on aggregate in the Final after a goalless draw in the delayed second leg in Cancun. Except for a defeat at home by modest Joe Public of Trinidad and Tobago, *Los Potros de Hierro* (the Iron Colts) were by far the most consistent team. Furthermore, they were the only Mexican club that took the tournament seriously, using their strongest starting XI from the very beginning.

But the big stories came from two teams who were representing countries where football is far from the most important sport. Without any regard to the hierarchy of the region, Puerto Rico Islanders and Montreal Impact managed to have very successful campaigns.

The Canadians, who were on the verge of being eliminated by Nicaraguan minnows Real Esteli in the preliminary round, built momentum as they progressed and victory in Honduras against Olimpia, plus a draw with Atlante, helped them to reach the quarter-finals.

There they faced another powerhouse, Santos Laguna, and defeated them 2-0 in the first leg, played in front of 55,000 spectators in Montreal – a record for a Canadian team and proof of the sport's potential in the country. However, things reverted to type in the return as the Mexican team won 5-2, but only thanks to two goals in stoppage time.

If the North Americans surprised everyone, Puerto Rico Islanders went one better as they advanced to the semi-finals, having gone through the first stage in a difficult group which included Santos Laguna, Municipal of Guatemala and Panama's Tauro.

They then beat Marathon of Honduras in the quarter-finals, winning the first leg 2-1 and surviving an initial onslaught to win the return 1-0 in San Pedro Sula at one of the most difficult venues in the region.

In the semi-finals they faced one of the traditional CONCACAF powers, Mexico's Cruz Azul, who were on the ropes after being defeated 2-0 in the first leg in Bayamon. However, the Mexico City-based club managed to bounce back in the return, though they had midfielder Cristian Riveros sent off in the first half and only advanced after a dramatic penalty shoot-out.

Both Islanders and Impact play in the USL, the second tier of US football, and their success should be food for thought for the leadership of Major League Soccer, whose teams started off as favourites but never lived up to the expectations placed upon them.

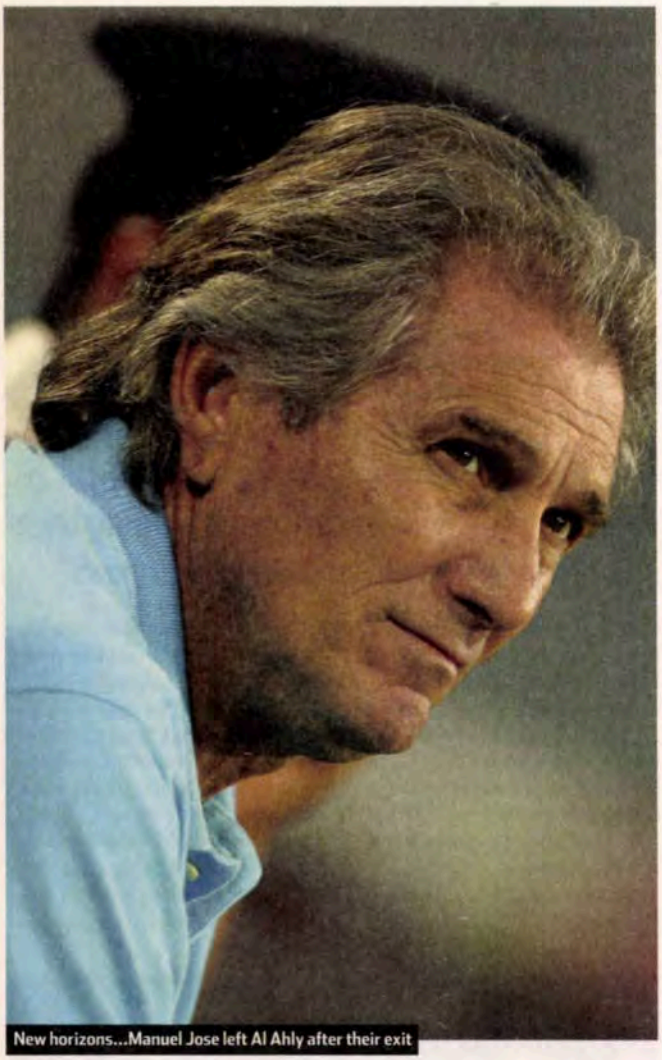
"Atlante were the only Mexican club who took the tournament seriously, fielding their strongest team from the very beginning"

Houston Dynamo advanced to the quarter-finals after a nail-biting victory over El Salvador's Luis Angel Firpo in their last match of the group stage. But in the last eight they found Atlante too tough a proposition and the champions-to-be went through 4-1 on aggregate without too much trouble. DC United, meanwhile, were the worst team in the tournament, managing to scrape just one draw from their six matches. ●

Martin Del Palacio Langer

Crash...Cruz Azul's Jaime Lozano is flattened by Josh Hansen of Puerto Rico Islanders

AFRICA Shock as the holders miss out


New horizons...Manuel Jose left Al Ahly after their exit

African Nations Cup in January.

The Egyptians had looked all set to progress after forcing a 1-1 draw in the first leg. However, they were caught with two sucker punches in the return leg and, despite staging a dramatic comeback in the last 20 minutes, they still ended up one goal shy of advancing.

They were joined on the sidelines by ASEC Abidjan of Ivory Coast, who were foiled in their bid for a record 10th appearance in the group phase over the past 13 years.

They were knocked out by the tournament's biggest surprise, Monomotapa of Zimbabwe, a team who are making their debut in continental competition. If their inexperience was not enough of a handicap, they are also having to overcome the vagaries of the ruined economic in their country.

ASEC had only a fragile 1-0 lead from their home leg and Monomotapa overhauled them with a goal from Daniel Kamunenga two minutes into stoppage time at the end of the second leg in Harare to win 2-1 on aggregate.

ASEC's defeat ended French coach Patrick Liewig's four-year tenure at the club and he was replaced by former striker Maxime Gouamene.

Also out are last year's runners-up, Cotonsport of Cameroon, who were beaten 3-2 on aggregate by Heartland from south-east Nigeria, a club who were known as Iwuanyanwu Nationale until 2006.

In addition to Monomotapa and the two Nigerian sides, the other newcomers to this stage are Al Merreikh of Sudan and Zambia's Zesco United, the first time a club from the copper-rich country has made it to the group phase.

Joining those going through are Sudan's Al Hilal, two-time winners TP Mazembe of DR Congo and 2007 champions Etoile Sahel.

Ordinarily, Etoile might be considered favourites given their previous exploits, but they are not the force they were 24 months ago. This year they could only finish third in the Tunisian championship and recently sacked German coach Gernot Rohr.

As a result, the absence of some of the bigger names leaves the outcome of this year's competition wide open. ●

Mark Gleeson

The absence of some of the continent's bigger names leaves the outcome of this year's competition wide open

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

THE FIELD for the group phase of this year's tournament features five teams who have yet to compete in the last eight of the continent's top club competition since the introduction of the new format 13 years ago.

The flurry of fresh faces follows a devastating swath of upsets in the last of the knockout rounds, including the elimination of the holders for a second successive season.

In 2008 it was Tunisia's Etoile Sahel who suffered a humiliating exit before they could properly defend their title, while this year it was the turn of all-conquering Al Ahly, with the Egyptian side being edged out on the away-goals rule.

Their 2-2 draw at home to Kano Pillars of Nigeria came as a huge surprise and hastened the planned departure of coach Manuel Jose, who is now preparing to take up the cause of Angola as they get ready to host the

No way through...Hugues Zagbayou of ASEC Abidjan (left) finds his progressed blocked by Monomotapa's Luckymore Simango

ASIA Japanese and Saudis march on

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

CLUB SIDES from Japan and Saudi Arabia underlined the strength of their respective leagues when all four representatives from each nation progressed to the knockout stage of the competition.

The new format has seen an additional knockout round – which will be played as a one-off match – added to the schedule as two teams, rather than the previous one, emerged from the group stage.

Following on from their impressive showing in last year's competition, defending champions Gamba Osaka from Japan were the first team to qualify, winning all of their first five matches in Group F before succumbing to Seoul in their final group game.

That win for the South Koreans, coupled with a shock 4-2 loss for Chinese champions Shandong Luneng at the hands of Sriwijaya of Indonesia, meant Senol Gunes' team also booked their place in the knockout phase, where they will face Japan's Kashima Antlers.

Australia's Newcastle Jets scraped through to the last 16 with a final-day win over Ulsan Hyundai to set up a meeting with twice Asian champions Pohang Steelers, while Suwon Bluewings will travel to Japan to take on Nagoya Grampus after putting their disappointing domestic form behind them to progress.

"There was nothing more that I could have asked from my team," said Newcastle coach Gary Van Egmond. "They fought with everything they had and were able to stop numerous amounts of attacks from a strong Korean side.

"We knew it was going to be difficult but we came and achieved our goal. I am very proud of our players."

As the Japanese have dominated in the east, so the Saudis have been impressive in the west of the continent as three of their four clubs topped their respective groups.

Al Hilal, twice winners of the defunct Asian Club Championship, defeated Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor 2-0 to win Group A and set up a meeting with Umm Salal of Qatar.

"We went into the game with only one target, which was to win the group, and we eventually achieved that with a good win," said Al Hilal coach Abdullatif Al Hussaini.

"The result doesn't mean that Pakhtakor are a weak team because they gave a battling performance."

Pakhtakor still did enough to progress from the group and they take on another Saudi side when they face Al Ettifaq, while former champions Al Ittihad won Group C to set up an all-Saudi clash with Al Shabab.

Iranian side Persepolis won Group B after beating Al Shabab and now face a mouth-watering encounter with Bunyodkor, who booked their place in the last 16 thanks to a 0-0 draw with Al Shabab of the United Arab Emirates in the last round of matches. ●

Michael Church

Ahead...Mohammad Al Anbar puts Al Hilal in front against Pakhtakor

All four representatives from Japan and Saudi Arabia progressed to the knockout stage of the competition

Battling on...Gamba Osaka (blue) and Seoul both reached the last 16

High-flier...Jets coach Gary Van Egmond

OCEANIA Kiwis are still top dogs

Final showdown...Paul Urlovic of Auckland (left) and Koloale's Welshman Houkarawa

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

NEW ZEALAND maintained the stranglehold they have exerted on Oceanic club competitions ever since Australia's defection to Asia in 2005, but this season's tournament followed a very different pattern to the previous two, when Waitakere United twice lost the opening leg of the Final in the heat and humidity of Melanesia before proving their superiority back in west Auckland's kinder clime.

In the latest edition, however, Auckland City hammered Koloale 7-2 in their Solomon Islands stronghold, then drew 2-2 at home a week later.

Overall, Auckland were a little flattered by the aggregate scoreline. Koloale did produce impressive patches in both encounters, but their defending was naive and, during key periods, the Kiwis dominated.

City simply outgunned the Solomon Islanders. They were able to call upon 10 players previously attached to professional outfits, whereas the Koloale amateurs' only player with any experience outside his own country was Henry Fa'arado, who was once briefly employed by Australia's Perth Glory.

In reality it was the concluding fixture in Group A, when City visited neighbours Waitakere, that determined who would lift the silverware.

Waitakere knew that only a win would be sufficient to give them a berth in the Final as the two rivals had the same number of points but Auckland enjoyed a superior goal difference thanks to notching 10 of the 16 goals that the section's third side, Port Vila Sharks, had conceded.

The Kiwi showdown – which was a torrid affair with eight yellow cards and two reds – was eventually decided by two incidents.

In the 22nd minute, Waitakere lost all their fluency with the sending off of influential midfielder Neil Emblen, then, midway through the second half, City defender Matt Friel, spotting that opposition goalkeeper Danny Robinson had strayed off his line, scored a with a sublimely struck free-kick.

In reality it was the last fixture in Group A, when City visited Waitakere, that determined who would lift the silverware

Two further Auckland goals, from Keryn Jordan and Adam McGeorge, quickly followed as United were caught on the counter-attack. Roy Krishna's fine 83rd-minute solo effort served only to provide a slightly more respectable scoreline.

Group B provided an even closer finish with all three participants in contention to qualify as the last game kicked off. Both Koloale and Fiji's Ba required a victory to advance into the Final, while a draw would have seen Papua New Guinea champions Hekari Souths United head the table.

As it transpired, Koloale's home advantage proved decisive on this occasion and, before a vociferous 10,000 crowd, Nicholas Muri scored the solitary goal.

Hekari raised a few eyebrows during the tournament by recording victories over each of their opponents – even beating Ba away – and provided Papua New Guinea football with its brightest moments for some time, albeit due to a line-up liberally sprinkled with foreigners.

Despite being the beneficiary of one of the most generous sponsorship deals in South Pacific sport (from a petroleum company), Hekari only gained a Champions League place after their opponents in an intended qualifying tournament – the top sides from Tuvalu and Cook Islands – withdrew for financial reasons.

While their performances in the group stage this term suggest that Hekari are destined to feature prominently in future years, it remains difficult to imagine any island's clubs seriously challenging New Zealand supremacy for a good while yet. ●

Paul Moon

City slickers...champions Auckland will now take part in December's Club World Cup in UAE

Rapid defeat...it's second spot

ANDORRA
Sant Julia take title
Sant Julia won the league, while runners-up Santa Coloma beat Lusitans 6-1 in the Cup Final.

ARMENIA
Pyunik do the double
Henrikh Mkhitaryan scored the only goal of the game as Pyunik beat Banants 1-0 in the Cup Final to complete a domestic double.

AUSTRIA
Rapid let in Salzburg
Salzburg were assured of their fifth title after nearest challengers Rapid lost 3-0 at Ried. Austria Wien beat second-tier Admira Wacker Modling 3-1 in extra-time to win the Cup for the 27th time.

LASK striker Ivan Vastic has announced his retirement. The 39-year-old scored 14 goals in 50 international appearances for Austria.

AZERBAIJAN
Number two for Baku
FK Baku sealed their second league title with a 4-0 win against Mughan on the final day of the season.

Karabakh beat Inter Baku 1-0 in the Cup Final and therefore qualify for next season's Europa League.

BULGARIA
Udoji sees red in derby
CSKA midfielder Shikoze Udoji was banned for six games for punching Levski defender Veselin Minev in the Sofia derby. The Nigerian-born 22-year-old was sent off midway through the second half of CSKA's 2-0 loss.

RESULTS

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semi-finals, 1st legs

Apr 28
Barcelona (Spa) 0
Chelsea (Eng) 0
Att: 95,231. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Barcelona: Valdes - Daniel Alves, Marquez (Puyol 52), Pique, Abidal, Xavi, Toure, Iniesta, Messi, Eto'o (Bojan 82), Henry (Hleb 87).
Chelsea: Cech - Ivanovic, Alex, Terry, Bosingwa, Essien, Ballack (Anelka 90), Mikel, Lampard (Belletti 71), Malouda, Drogba.

Apr 29
Manchester United (Eng) 1 (O'Shea 18)
Arsenal (Eng) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 74,733. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Man Utd: Van der Sar - O'Shea, Ferdinand (Evans 88), Vidic, Evra, Fletcher, Carrick, Cristiano Ronaldo, Anderson (Giggs 67), Rooney, Tevez (Berbatov 67).
Arsenal: Almunia - Sagna, Toure, Silvestre, Gibbs, Song, Diaby, Walcott (Bendtner 71), Fabregas, Nasri, Adebayor (Eduardo 83).

Semi-finals, 2nd legs

May 5
Arsenal 1 (Van Persie pen 76)
Manchester United 3 (Park 8, Cristiano Ronaldo 11, 61)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 59,867. **Ref:** Rosetti (Ita)
Man Utd 4-1 on agg
Arsenal: Almunia - Sagna, Toure, Djourou, Gibbs (Eboue 46), Song, Fabregas, Nasri, Walcott (Bendtner 63), Van Persie (Vela 79), Adebayor.
Man Utd: Van der Sar - O'Shea, Ferdinand, Vidic, Evra (Rafael 65), Fletcher, Carrick, Anderson (Giggs 63), Cristiano Ronaldo, Park, Rooney (Berbatov 66).
Sent off: Fletcher 74min.

May 6
Chelsea 1 (Essien 9)
Barcelona 1 (Iniesta 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 37,857. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Agg 1-1. Barcelona on away goals
Chelsea: Cech - Bosingwa, Alex, Terry, A Cole, Essien, Ballack, Lampard, Anelka, Malouda, Drogba (Belletti 72).
Barcelona: Valdes - Daniel Alves, Toure, Pique, Abidal, Busquets (Bojan 85), Xavi, Keita, Messi, Iniesta (Gudjohnsen 90+), Eto'o (Silvinho 90+).
Sent off: Abidal 66min.

For Final match details see Champions League feature, starting page 22

UEFA CUP

Semi-finals, 1st legs

Apr 30
Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 1 (Chygrynskyi og 22)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Fernandinho 68)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 16,700. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)

Apr 30
Werder Bremen (Ger) 0
Hamburg (Ger) 1 (Trochowski 28)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 37,500. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)

Semi-finals, 2nd legs

May 7
Hamburg 2 (Olic 12, 87)
Werder Bremen 3 (Diego 29, Pizarro 66, Baumann 83)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 51,000. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Agg 3-3. Werder on away goals

May 7
Shakhtar Donetsk 2 (Jadson 17, Ilsinho 89)
Dynamo Kyiv 1 (Bangoura 47)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 24,300. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
Shakhtar 3-2 on agg

For Final match details see UEFA Cup feature, pages 28/29

AUSTRIA

May 1: Austria Wien 0 Mattersburg 0.
May 2: Kapfenberg 2 Ried 1; LASK 0 Rapid 2; Altach 1 Sturm 1.
May 3: Salzburg 6 Austria Karnten 0.
May 8: LASK 2 Altach 0.
May 9: Ried 4 Mattersburg 0; Sturm 2 Austria Wien 2; Austria Karnten 0 Kapfenberg 2.
May 10: Rapid 4 Salzburg 2.
May 15: Kapfenberg 3 Sturm 3.
May 16: Salzburg 2 LASK 1; Austria Wien 4 Altach 1; Mattersburg 3 Austria Karnten 2.
May 17: Ried 3 Rapid 0.
May 21: Altach 5 Kapfenberg 1; Rapid 2 Mattersburg 3; LASK 4 Austria Wien 0; Sturm 2 Salzburg 0; Austria Karnten 1 Ried 2.

AUSTRIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg	35	23	5	7	85	46	74
Rapid	35	20	7	8	85	43	67
Sturm	35	17	9	9	66	42	60
Austria Wien	35	16	11	8	55	45	59
Ried	35	16	9	10	55	36	57
A Karnten	35	11	8	16	46	53	41
LASK	35	11	4	20	34	64	37
Kapfenberg	35	10	6	19	48	77	36
Mattersburg	35	7	9	19	39	70	30
Altach	35	7	6	22	52	89	27

BELGIUM

May 1: Club Brugge 2 Lokeren 3.
May 2: Westerlo 1 Roeselare 0; Mechelen 2 Charleroi 1; Mouscron 3 Germinal Beerschot 1; Dender 0 Mons 0; Zulte Waregem 0 Standard 0; Gent 2 Cercle Brugge 1.
May 3: Genk 0 Kortrijk 1; Tubize 1 Anderlecht 1.
May 8: Germinal Beerschot 3 Mechelen 1.
May 9: Mouscron 0 Zulte Waregem 2; Standard 2 Club Brugge 0; Charleroi 3 Genk 0; Mons 1 Tubize 1; Anderlecht 3 Roeselare 1; Cercle Brugge 2 Westerlo 1; Lokeren 0 Dender 2; Kortrijk 0 Gent 2.
May 15: Mechelen 3 Lokeren 0.
May 16: Gent 0 Standard 1; Genk 0 Anderlecht 2; Zulte Waregem 3 Mons 0; Tubize 1 Germinal Beerschot 0; Westerlo 1 Kortrijk 3; Club Brugge 4 Mouscron 1; Roeselare 1 Cercle Brugge 2; Dender 1 Charleroi 2.

BELGIUM – FINAL*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht*	34	24	5	5	75	30	77
Standard*	34	24	5	5	66	26	77
Club Brugge	34	18	5	11	59	50	59
Gent	34	17	8	9	67	42	59
Z Waregem	34	16	7	11	55	36	55
Westerlo	34	15	7	12	42	38	52
Lokeren	34	13	12	9	40	32	51
Genk	34	15	5	14	48	51	50
Cercle Brugge	34	14	5	15	48	53	47
Mechelen	34	12	10	12	46	52	46
Mouscron	34	12	8	14	42	49	44
Charleroi	34	12	7	15	43	48	43
Germinal B	34	11	9	14	44	42	42
Kortrijk	34	9	11	14	37	55	38
Dender	34	9	8	17	44	58	35
Roeselare	34	8	6	20	33	59	30
Tubize (R)	34	7	6	21	35	77	27
Mons (R)	34	3	10	21	31	57	19

**Anderlecht and Standard went into championship play-off after finishing level on points*

Championship play-off

1st leg - May 21; 2nd leg - May 24
Anderlecht v Standard
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)

Promoted: St Truiden

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Apr 29: Zvijezda 2 Celik 2; Velez 3 Siroki Brijeg 0; Posusje 1 Orasje 2; Modrica 2 Sarajevo 0; Laktasi 0 Borac 2; Slavija 1 Zrinjski 0; Zeljeznicar 3 Leotar 1; Sloboda 2 Travnik 0.
May 2: Travnik 3 Velez 0; Siroki Brijeg 2 Modrica 1; Orasje 2 Slavija 1; Leotar 3 Posusje 1; Sloboda 1 Zvijezda 0; Borac 2 Zeljeznicar 0.
May 3: Zrinjski 1 Celik 0; Sarajevo 1 Laktasi 0.
May 9: Celik 1 Orasje 0; Laktasi 2 Siroki Brijeg 1; Modrica 4 Travnik 1; Posusje 0 Borac 3; Slavija 2 Leotar 1; Velez 2 Sloboda 0; Zeljeznicar 2 Sarajevo 0; Zvijezda 2 Zrinjski 1.
May 16: Borac 1 Slavija 1; Leotar 1 Celik 0; Orasje 3 Zrinjski 2; Sarajevo 4 Posusje 0; Siroki Brijeg 3 Zeljeznicar 1; Sloboda 3 Modrica 0; Travnik 5 Laktasi 2; Velez 5 Zvijezda 3.
May 23: Celik 1 Borac 2; Laktasi 1 Sloboda 0; Modrica 3 Velez 3; Posusje 1 Siroki Brijeg 2; Slavija 2 Sarajevo 1; Zeljeznicar 2 Travnik 1; Zrinjski 1 Leotar 0; Zvijezda 3 Orasje 1.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zrinjski	30	18	3	9	50	37	57
Slavija	30	15	7	8	36	28	52
Sloboda	30	15	5	10	32	26	50
Sarajevo	30	14	7	9	43	30	49
Borac	30	15	4	11	45	26	49
Siroki Brijeg	30	14	3	13	47	38	45
Zvijezda	30	11	10	9	43	38	43
Laktasi	30	12	6	12	43	39	42
Zeljeznicar	30	13	3	14	30	35	42
Celik	30	12	5	13	29	32	41
Leotar	30	12	3	15	32	42	39
Velez	30	11	4	15	42	45	37
Modrica	30	10	7	13	37	41	37
Travnik	30	11	4	15	38	53	37
Orasje (R)	30	9	7	14	33	43	34
Posusje (R)	30	5	8	17	31	58	23

BULGARIA

May 1: Cherno More 6 Belasitsa 0.
May 2: Vihren 1 Slavia 2; Chernomorets 0 CSKA 1; Lovech 3 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0.
May 3: Lokomotiv Sofia 3 Lokomotiv Mezdra 0; Pirin 1 Minyor 0; Levski 1 Sliven 0.
May 4: Botev 1 Spartak Varna 0.
May 8: Slavia 4 Botev 0.
May 9: Lokomotiv Mezdra 2 Lovech 4; CSKA 0 Levski 2; Spartak Varna 0 Chernomorets 3.
May 10: Belasitsa 2 Lokomotiv Sofia 4; Sliven 0 Cherno More 1; Minyor 3 Vihren 2.
May 11: Lokomotiv Plovdiv 3 Pirin 2.
May 15: Lovech 4 Belasitsa 1.
May 16: Lokomotiv Sofia 3 Sliven 2; Lokomotiv Mezdra 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Cherno More 1 CSKA 0; Chernomorets 2 Slavia 1.
May 17: Botev 1 Minyor 2; Levski 5 Spartak Varna 0.
May 18: Vihren 1 Pirin 3.
May 23: CSKA 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 0; Spartak Varna 0 Cherno More 1; Belasitsa 1 Lokomotiv Mezdra 3; Pirin 0 Botev 3; Sliven 2 Lovech 2; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0 Vihren 1; Slavia 0 Levski 1; Minyor 1 Chernomorets 0.

BULGARIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Levski	28	21	4	3	55	16	67
CSKA	28	20	5	3	52	20	65
Cherno More	28	17	5	6	44	17	56
Lok Sofia	28	16	4	8	48	25	52
Lovech	28	15	7	6	48	26	52
Chernomorets	28	9	10	9	33	33	37
Lok Plovdiv	28	10	7	11	35	42	37
Slavia	28	11	3	14	39	34	36
Lok Mezdra	28	9	7	12	36	39	34
Pirin	28	10	4	14	33	46	34
Minyor	28	9	6	13	21	36	33
Sliven	28	8	8	12	32	36	32
Botev	28	7	6	15	28	46	27
Vihren	28	8	2	18	25	42	26
Spartak Varna	28	5	9	14	17	40	24
Belasitsa	28	3	5	20	21	69	14

CROATIA

May 3: Osijek 1 Zadar 0; Slaven 1 Sibenik 0; Cibalia 3 Sesvete 0; Zagreb 1 Inter 0; Dinamo 4 Rijeka 0; Hajduk 0 Varteks 1.
May 10: Sibenik 0 Dinamo 2; Slaven 2 Zagreb 1; Varteks 2 Osijek 3; Zadar 3 Cibalia 1; Sesvete 0 Inter 3; Rijeka 2 Hajduk 1.
May 17: Hajduk 2 Sibenik 0; Osijek 1 Rijeka 2; Cibalia 2 Varteks 1; Inter 2 Zadar 2; Zagreb 0 Sesvete 0; Dinamo 2 Slaven 0.
May 24: Slaven 1 Hajduk 1; Dinamo 0 Zagreb 1; Sibenik 2 Osijek 1; Rijeka 2 Cibalia 0; Varteks 0 Inter 1; Zadar 1 Sesvete 1.

CROATIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	32	23	4	5	69	24	73
Hajduk	32	21	4	7	57	23	67
Rijeka	32	17	5	10	50	41	56
Slaven	32	15	7	10	44	38	52
Sibenik	32	13	7	12	43	33	46
Zagreb	32	12	8	12	35	38	44
Osijek	32	10	11	11	39	39	41
Varteks	32	10	5	17	40	53	35
Cibalia	32	9	8	15	31	52	35
Inter	32	8	9	15	38	50	33
Zadar	32	7	8	17	27	46	29
Sesvete*	32	5	8	19	29	65	22

**1pt deducted because of unpaid debt*

WORLD SERVICE

CYPRUS

Middendorp is boss

Anorthosis named Ernst Middendorp as their new coach after negotiations with Ewald Lienen broke down.

Omonia captain Costas Kaiafas has retired after 17 years with the club. The 34-year-old midfielder played a total of 320 games for the team who finished league runners-up this season.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Slavia triumph with games to spare

Slavia retained their league crown with two games to go following a 3-1 win at Zizkov.

Pavel Fort scored two first-half goals for Slavia, either side of a Lubos Hruska own goal, to all but seal the points. Pavol Straka pulled a goal back for the home side 16 minutes from time.

DENMARK

Copenhagen wrap up the league and Cup

Copenhagen took the title with a 1-0 win at Esbjerg. William Kvist's 31st-minute goal in the Cup Final against AaB completed the double.

ENGLAND

Saviour Sbragia goes

Sunderland manager Ricky Sbragia resigned after his side managed to avoid relegation despite losing 3-2 to Chelsea at the Stadium Of Light. Newcastle, Middlesbrough and WBA went down.

Meanwhile, newly promoted Burnley are to hand out 7,000 free season tickets for their debut Premier League campaign. Though the gesture will cost the club £2million, promotion to the top flight is worth over £50m.

Safe and sound...Sbragia

CYPRUS

Championship group

May 1: APOEL 3 AEL 1.
May 2: Omonia 1 Anorthosis 0.
May 9: AEL 1 Anorthosis 1.

CYPRUS – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL	31	26	4	1	62	17	82
Omonia	31	25	1	5	70	22	76
Anorthosis	32	21	4	7	52	26	67
AEL	32	13	5	14	38	41	44

**Pending FA verdict on APOEL v Omonia game, which was abandoned because of crowd trouble*

Intermediate group

May 1: APOP 1 Ethnikos 4; Apollon 3 Doxa 1.
May 8: Doxa 2 Ethnikos 5.
May 10: Apollon 3 APOP 2.

CYPRUS – INTERMEDIATE GROUP – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Apollon	32	17	6	9	68	42	57
Ethnikos	32	13	8	11	47	45	47
APOP*	32	13	6	13	45	49	39
Doxa	32	10	8	14	46	51	38

**6pts deducted*

Relegation group

May 2: ENP 0 APEP 1; AEP 3 Alki 4.
May 9: AEP 3 ENP 0; Alki 1 APEP 1.

CYPRUS – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEP	32	7	15	10	39	44	36
ENP	32	8	8	16	27	51	32
APEP	32	7	10	15	33	51	31
Alki (R)	32	6	9	17	39	59	27

Promoted: Ermis Aradippou, Aris Limassol, Nea Salamina

CZECH REPUBLIC

May 2: Zlin 2 Bohemians 0.
May 3: Zizkov 2 Ceske Budejovice 1; Brno 1 Slavia 0; Jablonec 3 Plzen 0; Kladno 1 Pribram 0; Olomouc 2 Teplice 1; Mlada Boleslav 1 Liberec 4.
May 4: Sparta 1 Ostrava 0.
May 9: Pribram 2 Olomouc 1; Plzen 3 Brno 2; Liberec 2 Zizkov 1.
May 10: Bohemians 4 Jablonec 3; Teplice 2 Kladno 1; Slavia 2 Ceske Budejovice 0; Zlin 2 Sparta 1.
May 11: Ostrava 0 Mlada Boleslav 2.
May 17: Brno 1 Teplice 1; Kladno 0 Liberec 0; Jablonec 4 Pribram 0; Mlada Boleslav 1 Plzen 1; Ceske Budejovice 3 Ostrava 2; Olomouc 1 Zlin 1; Sparta 1 Bohemians 0.
May 18: Zizkov 1 Slavia 3.
May 23: Sparta 3 Jablonec 2; Bohemians 2 Mlada Boleslav 1; Ostrava 1 Olomouc 1; Plzen 1 Kladno 0; Zlin 2 Brno 1; Pribram 3 Zizkov 0; Liberec 2 Ceske Budejovice 0; Teplice 0 Slavia 1.

CZECH REPUBLIC	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slavia	29	18	7	4	55	23	61
Sparta	29	15	8	6	45	25	53
Liberec	29	14	9	6	39	26	51
M Boleslav	29	12	10	7	39	35	46
Olomouc	29	12	9	8	36	36	45
Teplice	29	12	7	10	33	22	43
Jablonec	29	13	4	12	37	36	43
Plzen	29	10	10	9	43	38	40
Ostrava	29	10	6	13	37	36	36
Brno	29	9	8	12	31	34	35
Bohemians	29	10	4	15	33	43	34
C Budejovice	29	6	15	8	27	37	33
Pribram	29	8	7	14	28	39	31
Kladno	29	8	7	14	21	40	31
Zlin	29	7	8	14	25	43	29
Zizkov	29	5	7	17	27	43	22

DENMARK

May 2: Vejle 1 Brondby 3.
May 3: Nordsjaelland 0 Midtjylland 2; Randers 1 Esbjerg 0; SonderjyskE 2 Horsens 0; Copenhagen 3 AaB 0.
May 4: OB 6 AGF 1.
May 8: Horsens 2 Midtjylland 3.
May 9: Copenhagen 3 Nordsjaelland 1.
May 10: SonderjyskE 0 Vejle 0; Randers 0 OB 0; Esbjerg 1 Brondby 2.
May 11: AaB 1 AGF 1.
May 13: Nordsjaelland 0 SonderjyskE 0; OB 3 Copenhagen 2; Vejle 1 Horsens 1.
May 14: Midtjylland 2 AaB 1; AGF 3 Esbjerg 1; Brondby 3 Randers 0.
May 16: SonderjyskE 1 OB 1.
May 17: AaB 2 Horsens 2; Esbjerg 1 Midtjylland 0; Randers 1 AGF 1; Copenhagen 4 Brondby 0.
May 18: Nordsjaelland 4 Vejle 1.
May 24: AGF 1 Brondby 0; Horsens 2 Nordsjaelland 3; Randers 3 Vejle 2; AaB 1 SonderjyskE 1; Esbjerg 0 Copenhagen 1; Midtjylland 1 OB 1.

DENMARK	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Copenhagen	32	23	4	5	64	23	73
Brondby	32	21	5	6	53	27	68
OB	32	20	6	6	63	30	66
Midtjylland	32	15	7	10	51	44	52
Randers	32	11	12	9	49	47	45
AGF	32	13	6	13	38	42	45
AaB	32	9	11	12	38	47	38
Nordsjaelland	32	9	7	16	42	51	34
Esbjerg	32	7	10	15	31	40	31
SonderjyskE	32	5	12	15	29	55	27
Horsens	32	5	9	18	34	56	24
Vejle	32	3	13	16	28	58	22

ENGLAND

Saturday, May 2

Chelsea 3 (Anelka 1, Malouda 10, Drogba 53)
Fulham 1 (Nevland 4) Att: 41,801

Manchester City 3 (Caicedo 27, Robinho 34, Elano pen 45)
Blackburn 1 (Andrews 66) Att: 43,967

Middlesbrough 0
Manchester United 2 (Giggs 25, Park 51) Att: 33,767

Portsmouth 0
Arsenal 3 (Bendtner 13, pen 41, Vela 56) Att: 20,418

Stoke 0
West Ham 1 (Tristan 33) Att: 27,500

Tottenham 1 (Jenas 43)
West Bromwich 0 Att: 35,836

Wigan 0
Bolton 0 Att: 18,655

Sunday, May 3

Liverpool 3 (Benayoun 22, Kuijt 27, Lucas 87)
Newcastle 0 Att: 44,121

Sunderland 0
Everton 2 (Pienaar 48, Fellaini 71) Att: 41,313

Monday, May 4

Aston Villa 1 (Carew 34)
Hull 0 Att: 39,607

Saturday, May 9

Blackburn 2 (Gamst Pedersen 31, McCarthy pen 58)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 24,234

Bolton 0
Sunderland 0 Att: 24,005

Everton 0
Tottenham 0 Att: 36,646

Fulham 3 (Murphy pen 6, Kamara 46, 60)
Aston Villa 1 (A Young 14) Att: 25,660

Hull 1 (Dawson 90)
Stoke 2 (Fuller 41, Lawrence 73) Att: 24,932

West Bromwich 3 (Fortune 8, 73, Brunt 59)
Wigan 1 (Rodallega 17) Att: 24,741

West Ham 0
Liverpool 3 (Gerrard 2, 38, Babel 84) Att: 34,951

Sunday, May 10

Arsenal 1 (Bendtner 70)
Chelsea 4 (Alex 28, Anelka 39, Toure og 49, Malouda 86) Att: 60,075

Manchester United 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 18, Tevez 45)
Manchester City 0 Att: 75,464

Monday, May 11

Newcastle 3 (S Taylor 9, Martins 70, Lovenkrands 85)
Middlesbrough 1 (Beye og 3) Att: 51,252

Wednesday, May 13

Wigan 1 (Rodallega 28)
Manchester United 2 (Tevez 61, Carrick 86) Att: 21,286

Saturday, May 16

Bolton 1 (Steinsson 26)
Hull 1 (Fagan 46) Att: 25,085

Everton 3 (Saha pen 38, 76, Yobo 48)
West Ham 1 (Kovac 24) Att: 38,501

Manchester United 0
Arsenal 0 Att: 75,468

Middlesbrough 1 (Tuncay 14)
Aston Villa 1 (Carew 57) Att: 27,261

Newcastle 0
Fulham 1 (Kamara 41) Att: 52,114

Stoke 2 (Fuller 69, Beattie 76)
Wigan 0 Att: 25,641

Tottenham 2 (Defoe 29, Keane pen 86)
Manchester City 1 (Bojinov 65) Att: 36,000

Sunday, May 17

Chelsea 2 (Malouda 4, Anelka 59)
Blackburn 0 Att: 40,804

West Bromwich 0
Liverpool 2 (Gerrard 28, Kuijt 63) Att: 26,138

Monday, May 18

Portsmouth 3 (Utaka 60, Bardsley og 68, Traore 87)
Sunderland 1 (Jones 58) Att: 20,398

Sunday, May 24

Arsenal 4 (Beattie og 10, Van Persie pen 15, 41, Diaby 17)
Stoke 1 (Fuller pen 30) Att: 60,082

Aston Villa 1 (Duff og 37)
Newcastle 0 Att: 42,585

Blackburn 0
West Bromwich 0 Att: 28,389

Fulham 0
Everton 2 (Osman 44, 87) Att: 25,497

Hull 0
Manchester United 1 (Gibson 24) Att: 24,945

Liverpool 3 (Fernando Torres 31, Hutton og 63, Benayoun 81)
Tottenham 1 (Keane 77) Att: 43,937

Manchester City 1 (Caicedo 8)
Bolton 0 Att: 47,202

Sunderland 2 (Richardson 52, Jones 90)
Chelsea 3 (Anelka 47, Kalou 74, A Cole 86) Att: 42,468

West Ham 2 (Cole 33, Stanislas 57)
Middlesbrough 1 (O'Neil 49) Att: 34,007

Wigan 1 (Rodallega 26)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 17,696

ENGLAND – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	38	28	6	4	68	24	90
Liverpool	38	25	11	2	77	27	86
Chelsea	38	25	8	5	68	24	83
Arsenal	38	20	12	6	68	37	72
Everton	38	17	12	9	55	37	63
Aston Villa	38	17	11	10	54	48	62
Fulham	38	14	11	13	39	34	53
Tottenham	38	14	9	15	45	45	51
West Ham	38	14	9	15	42	45	51
Man City	38	15	5	18	58	50	50
Wigan	38	12	9	17	34	45	45
Stoke	38	12	9	17	38	55	45
Bolton	38	11	8	19	41	53	41
Portsmouth	38	10	11	17	38	57	41
Blackburn	38	10	11	17	40	60	41
Sunderland	38	9	9	20	34	54	36
Hull	38	8	11	19	39	64	35
Newcastle (R)	38	7	13	18	40	59	34
Midd'bro (R)	38	7	11	20	28	57	32
West Brom (R)	38	8	8	22	36	67	32

ESTONIA

Flora make amends

Last season's beaten finalists Flora overcame Nomme Kalju 4-3 on penalties in this year's Cup Final following a 0-0 draw after extra time.

Despite their defeat, Nomme Kalju will enter next season's Europa League qualifiers as Flora had already qualified for the competition as league runners-up.

FRANCE

Coaches on the move

Paris Saint-Germain have chosen not to extend the contract of coach Paul Le Guen. He replaced Guy Lacombe at the Parc des Princes in January 2007 and last season led PSG to the League Cup.

Elsewhere, Nice have announced that Didier Olle-Nicolle will be their coach next season, with the 47-year-old taking over from Frederic Antonetti on a two-year deal. Monaco chose not to renew the contract of their coach, Ricardo Gomes.

Gabon's 19-year-old striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang will join Lille on loan from Milan next season.

Quick strike...Danze

19 seconds it took Romain Danze to score for Rennes against Bordeaux – the fastest goal in the French league this season

TOP GOALSCORERS

19	Nicolas Anelka (Chelsea)
18	Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United)
16	Steven Gerrard (Liverpool)
14	Fernando Torres (Liverpool)
14	Robinho (Manchester City)

Promoted: Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Burnley

FINLAND

Apr 29: Inter 1 Jaro 0; Mariehamn 3 KuPS 0; Lahti 4 RoPS 1; MyPa 4 Tampere 1; Haka 1 HJK 2.
May 2: MyPa 0 Inter 0; Tampere 1 VPS 0.
May 4: TPS 1 Jaro 1; Haka 1 Honka 1.
May 6: HJK 2 Mariehamn 0.
May 7: RoPS 0 Inter 2; Lahti 0 VPS 0; Jaro 1 KuPS 1; JJK 0 Haka 0; Honka 0 MyPa 0.
May 8: Tampere 0 TPS 2.
May 10: RoPS 0 Mariehamn 0; KuPS 2 JJK 0.
May 11: MyPa 1 HJK 0.
May 13: VPS 1 Jaro 2.
May 14: JJK 1 RoPS 1; Haka 1 Tampere 0; MyPa 2 Lahti 2; HJK 1 Honka 1; Inter 2 TPS 0.
May 17: JJK 1 HJK 1; Haka 3 RoPS 1; Lahti 2 Jaro 1; Mariehamn 0 MyPa 0; TPS 2 VPS 0; Tampere 1 Honka 0.
May 18: KuPS 0 Inter 2.
May 23: Inter 0 Haka 2; JJK 2 Honka 3.
May 24: Jaro 3 MyPa 0; Tampere 2 KuPS 0; VPS 2 RoPS 0; TPS 0 Mariehamn 0.
May 25: HJK 1 Lahti 0.

FINLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Haka	8	5	2	1	11	5	17
Inter	8	5	1	2	9	5	16
HJK	8	4	3	1	14	7	15
Lahti	7	3	3	1	11	7	12
Jaro	7	3	2	2	10	6	11
Honka	8	2	5	1	14	11	11
Mariehamn	7	2	4	1	7	4	10
TPS	8	2	4	2	8	7	10
MyPa	8	2	4	2	8	8	10
Tampere	7	3	0	4	5	9	9
JJK	6	0	4	2	4	7	4
VPS	7	1	1	5	5	11	4
KuPS	7	1	1	5	4	14	4
RoPS	6	0	2	4	3	12	2

FRANCE

Wednesday, April 29
Rennes 2 (Danze 1, Sow 89)
Bordeaux 3 (Gouffran 62, Gourcuff 70, 90) Att: 26,079

Saturday, May 2
Caen 3 (Barzola 8, Seube 52, Deroin 56)
Le Mans 1 (Cerdan 26) Att: 18,615

Grenoble 0
Nice 0 Att: 15,994

Lorient 3 (Ciani 64, Saifi 87, Abriel 90)
Lille 1 (Cabaye 36) Att: 11,573

Marseille 2 (Niang 63, Cetto og 73)
Toulouse 2 (Gignac 48, 72) Att: 55,823

Monaco 0
Auxerre 1 (Kahlenberg 26) Att: 7,203

Saint-Etienne 0
Nancy 0 Att: 30,446

Valenciennes 2 (Audel 23, 29)
Lyon 0 Att: 14,826

Sunday, May 3
Bordeaux 3 (Sertic 7, Gourcuff 14, Chamakh 90)
Sochaux 0 Att: 27,133

Nantes 1 (Bekamenga 24)
Le Havre 2 (Diallo 40, Marange 61) Att: 21,809

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Rennes 1 (Sakho og 66) Att: 43,875

Tuesday, May 12
Lyon 3 (Makoun 7, 34, Mounier 79)
Nantes 0 Att: 36,792

Wednesday, May 13
Auxerre 2 (Jelen 37, 74)
Grenoble 0 Att: 10,738

Le Havre 2 (Diallo 11, Sambou 18)
Saint-Etienne 4 (Ilan 4, Bayal Sall 46, Mirallas 69, Riviere 90) Att: 14,754

Le Mans 0
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Kezman 18) Att: 12,815

Nancy 2 (Saifi og 27, Sami 48)
Lorient 2 (Gameiro 53, 82) Att: 18,148

Nice 0
Marseille 2 (Niang 26, Brandao 60) Att: 16,669

Rennes 1 (Hansson 61)
Caen 0 Att: 20,880

Sochaux 3 (Martin 20, Modesto og 47, Sverkos 71)
Monaco 0 Att: 16,879

Toulouse 0
Lille 0 Att: 19,944

Valenciennes 1 (Danic pen 22)
Bordeaux 2 (Fernando 38, Gourcuff 83) Att: 15,104

Saturday, May 16
Bordeaux 3 (Chamakh 38, Gourcuff 45, Planus 76)
Le Mans 2 (Le Tallec 24, 55) Att: 32,722

Caen 2 (Savidan 77, 90)
Sochaux 0 Att: 18,927

Grenoble 0
Nancy 0 Att: 15,498

Lorient 1 (Vahirua 63)
Le Havre 1 (Diallo 11) Att: 10,675

Monaco 1 (Park 6)
Valenciennes 1 (Audel 61) Att: 7,026

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Mignot og 83)
Auxerre 2 (Camara og 40, Jelen 45) Att: 40,870

Saint-Etienne 2 (Bayal Sall 34, Ilan pen 73)
Toulouse 2 (Sissoko 66, Gignac 89) Att: 30,203

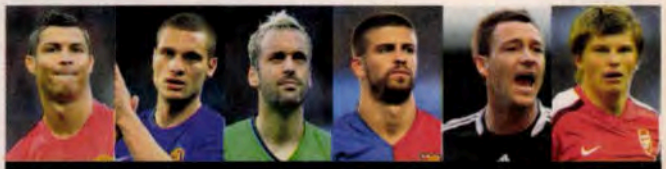
Sunday, May 17
Lille 1 (Cabaye 71)
Nice 1 (Modeste 34) Att: 16,909

Marseille 1 (Wiltord 80)
Lyon 3 (Benzema pen 31, 42, Juninho 90) Att: 56,498

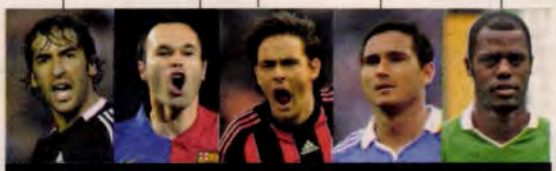
Nantes 1 (Bagayoko 42)
Rennes 1 (Sow 84) Att: 26,068

ESM Team of the Month

European Sports Magazines — APRIL 2009



Cristiano Ronaldo — Manchester United — Votes ●●●●
Nemanja Vidic — Manchester United — Votes ●●●
Manuel Almunia — Arsenal — Votes ●●
Gerard Pique — Barcelona — Votes ●●●●
John Terry — Chelsea — Votes ●●●●
Andrei Arshavin — Arsenal — Votes ●●●●



Raul — Real Madrid — Votes ●●●
Andres Iniesta — Barcelona — Votes ●●●●●●
Filippo Inzaghi — Milan — Votes ●●●●●
Frank Lampard — Chelsea — Votes ●●●
Grafite — Wolfsburg — Votes ●●●

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Magazines group vote for their first XI from Europe's top leagues. The players with the most votes make the overall team. For details of how ESM members voted this month, visit: **worldsoccer.com/esm11**

Hit for six...Bielefeld

29 successful spot-kicks in the Greek Cup Final penalty shoot-out, won by Olympiakos

GERMANY
No change at bottom

Arminia Bielefeld sacked coach Michael Frontzeck after they were beaten 6-0 by Borussia Dortmund, but the drastic action still did not help them avoid relegation. Fellow strugglers Eintracht Frankfurt, who did beat the drop, have terminated the contract of coach Friedhelm Funkel.

Christian Nerlinger has been appointed sporting director at Bayern Munich. The former Germany international takes over the position from Uli Hoeness.

Liverpool and Finland centre-back Sami Hyypia has agreed to join Bayer Leverkusen on a free transfer. The 35-year-old will sign a two-year deal.

GREECE
Ketsbaia gets job with double winners

Olympiakos have appointed Temuri Ketsbaia as their new coach in place of Ernesto Valverde. The 41-year-old Cypriot-Georgian quit as boss of Cypriot club Anorthosis of Famagusta in April.

HOLLAND
El Hamdaoui honoured

AZ Alkmaar striker Mounir El Hamdaoui was named Dutch Player of the Season, ahead of Groningen keeper Luciano and Twente forward Eljero Elia.

International defender Andre Ooijer will return to PSV next season after spending

Saturday, May 23
Auxerre 1 (Jelen 59)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 17,891

Bordeaux 1 (Chamakh 36)
Monaco 0 Att: 32,620

Le Havre 0
Lille 1 (Bastos 66) Att: 13,474

Le Mans 1 (Le Tallec 81)
Grenoble 1 (Cesar 70) Att: 11,858

Lyon 3 (Juninho pen 34, Govou 70, Benzema 89)
Caen 1 (Savidan 82) Att: 39,312

Nancy 1 (N'Guemo 88)
Marseille 2 (Bonnart 32, Brandao 56) Att: 20,017

Nice 0
Toulouse 2 (Gignac 13, 30) Att: 9,156

Rennes 3 (Sow 41, Fanni 45, Kembo-Ekoko 82)
Lorient 1 (Vahirua 79) Att: 27,728

Sochaux 2 (Erdinc 35, Afolabi 45)
Nantes 1 (Bagayoko pen 61) Att: 19,313

Valenciennes 2 (Audel 61, Pujol 67)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Kezman 11) Att: 15,884

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bordeaux	37	23	8	6	63	34	77
Marseille	37	21	11	5	63	35	74
Lyon	37	20	10	7	52	29	70
Toulouse	37	16	15	6	45	27	63
PSG	37	19	6	12	49	38	63
Rennes	37	15	16	6	42	30	61
Lille	37	16	13	8	48	37	61
Auxerre	37	16	7	14	34	33	55
Nice	37	13	10	14	40	41	49
Lorient	37	10	14	13	46	46	44
Valenciennes	37	10	14	13	35	38	44
Monaco	37	11	11	15	41	45	44
Grenoble	37	10	14	13	24	36	44
Nancy	37	10	12	15	36	44	42
Sochaux	37	9	12	16	39	48	39
Le Mans	37	10	9	18	42	53	39
Caen	37	8	13	16	42	48	37
Saint-Etienne	37	10	7	20	36	56	37
Nantes	37	8	10	19	31	53	34
Le Havre	37	7	4	26	30	67	25

LEADING GOALSCORERS
24 Andre-Pierre Gignac (Toulouse)
17 Karim Benzema (Lyon)
17 Guillaume Hoarau (Paris Saint-Germain)
14 Michel Bastos (Lille)
14 Ireneusz Jelen (Auxerre)
14 Steve Savidan (Caen)

FRENCH CUP – Final
May 9 - Saint-Denis
Rennes 1 (Bocanegra 69)
Guingamp 2 (Eduardo 72, 83)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 80,056. **Ref:** Auriac

GEORGIA

May 2: Mglebi 4 Meskheti 1.
May 3: Spartaki 1 Lokomotivi 3; Gagra 0 Olimpi 1; Sioni 1 Dinamo 1; Borjomi 1 Zestaponi 3.
May 9: Lokomotivi 1 Sioni 1; Meskheti 6 Borjomi 0.
May 10: Zestaponi 6 Gagra 0; Dinamo 1 WIT Georgia 1; Olimpi 1 Spartaki 0.
May 17: Sioni 3 WIT Georgia 4; Mglebi 1 Dinamo 0; Lokomotivi 1 Olimpi 3; Gagra 2 Meskheti 0; Spartaki 1 Zestaponi 0.
May 23: Olimpi 0 Sioni 1; Zestaponi 1 Lokomotivi 3; Meskheti 1 Spartaki 0; WIT Georgia 4 Mglebi 0; Dinamo 12 Borjomi 0.

GEORGIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
WIT Georgia	30	20	9	1	57	19	69
Dinamo	30	19	6	5	70	21	63
Olimpi	30	16	9	5	40	20	57
Zestaponi	30	16	4	10	43	27	52
Sioni	30	11	11	8	35	29	44
Lokomotivi	30	10	8	12	35	33	38
Mglebi	30	10	6	14	36	41	36
Meskheti	30	7	8	15	23	42	29
Gagra	30	7	7	16	23	48	28
Spartaki	30	6	7	17	28	46	25
Borjomi (R)	30	2	7	21	21	85	13

GERMANY

Friday, May 1
Bochum 0
Hannover 2 (Bruggink 12, Balitsch 32) Att: 26,072

Saturday, May 2
Arminia Bielefeld 2 (Katongo 30, Munteanu pen 68)
Stuttgart 2 (Delpierre 4, Hitzlsperger 35) Att: 25,800

Bayern Munich 2 (Schweinsteiger 33, Altintop 42)
Monchengladbach 1 (Daems pen 38) Att: 69,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Zidan 79, Bellaid og 84) Att: 51,500

Karlsruhe 0
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 27,311

Schalke 1 (Kuranyi 87)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Helmes 9, Renato Augusto 27) Att: 61,162

Wolfsburg 4 (Dzeko 65, 74, 78, Grafite pen 89)
1899 Hoffenheim 0 Att: 30,000

Sunday, May 3
Hamburg 1 (Jansen 8)
Hertha Berlin 1 (Kacar 66) Att: 57,000

Koln 1 (Novakovic 61)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 50,000

Friday, May 8
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Kiessling 21, Helmes 79)
Arminia Bielefeld 2 (Friedrich og 22, Tesche 39) Att: 23,150

Saturday, May 9
Borussia Dortmund 4 (Blaszczykowski 25, Sahin 62, Felipe Santana 71, Frei 80)
Karlsruhe 0 Att: 80,100

Energie Cottbus 1 (Iliev 44)
Bayern Munich 3 (Sosa 23, Demichelis 62, Podolski 66) Att: 22,528

Hannover 1 (Bruggink 9)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Korkmaz 42) Att: 44,855

Hertha Berlin 2 (Pantelic 39, Raffael 50)
Bochum 0 Att: 71,323

1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Salihovic 58, Ba 68)
Koln 0 Att: 30,150

Stuttgart 4 (Gomez 1, 20, 63, 76)
Wolfsburg 1 (Dzeko 36) Att: 55,700

Sunday, May 10
Monchengladbach 1 (Colautti 90)
Schalke 0 Att: 54,067

Werder Bremen 2 (Hugo Almeida 34, 49)
Hamburg 0 Att: 42,100

Tuesday, May 12
Bayern Munich 3 (Toni 47, Ribery 59, Podolski 71)
Bayer Leverkusen 0 Att: 69,000

Karlsruhe 2 (Iashvili 11, Stindl 32)
Hannover 3 (Pinto 42, Forssell 45, Balitsch 64) Att: 23,930

Koln 1 (Chihi 90)
Hertha Berlin 2 (Cicero 42, Ebert 53) Att: 48,000

Wolfsburg 3 (Dzeko 15, 85, Grafite 47)
Borussia Dortmund 0 Att: 30,000

Wednesday, May 13
Arminia Bielefeld 0
1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Wellington 25, Salihovic pen 82) Att: 25,200

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Werder Bremen 5 (Frings pen 51, 56, Tziolis 60, Pizarro 62, Hugo Almeida 77) Att: 51,400

Energie Cottbus 0
Monchengladbach 1 (Dante 90) Att: 20,850

Hamburg 3 (Guerrero 15, Olic 33, 58)
Bochum 1 (Freier 71) Att: 47,942

Schalke 1 (Rakitic 39)
Stuttgart 2 (Cacau 15, Marica 57) Att: 61,673

Saturday, May 16
Bayer Leverkusen 5 (Kiessling 31, Helmes 44, Castro 68, Kadlec 79, Dante og 86)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 43,000

Bochum 2 (Hashemian 26, Klimowicz 72)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 30,420

Borussia Dortmund 6 (Kehl 43, 72, Hajnal 53, Haedo Valdez 69, Tinga 84, Zidan 87)
Arminia Bielefeld 0 Att: 80,200

Hamburg 0
Koln 1 (Ehret 9) Att: 57,000

Hannover 0
Wolfsburg 5 (Dzeko 14, 54, 79, Grafite 33, 36) Att: 49,000

Hertha Berlin 0
Schalke 0 Att: 74,244

1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Ba 21, Carlos Eduardo 28)
Bayern Munich 2 (Ribery 16, Toni 44) Att: 30,150

Stuttgart 2 (Hitzlsperger 19, Cacau 78)
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 55,500

Werder Bremen 1 (Hugo Almeida 73)
Karlsruhe 3 (Stindl 28, 39, Iashvili 55) Att: 39,119

Saturday, May 23
Arminia Bielefeld 2 (Eggimann og 2, Wichniarek 90)
Hannover 2 (Stajner 57, Pinto 84) Att: 27,300

Bayern Munich 2 (Boulahrouz og 16, Van Bommel 60)
Stuttgart 1 (Gomez 63) Att: 69,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Meier 61, Caio 63)
Hamburg 3 (Jarolim 22, Olic 58, Trochowski 90) Att: 51,500

Energie Cottbus 3 (Jula 50, 69, Rivic 64)
Bayer Leverkusen 0 Att: 20,140

Karlsruhe 4 (Freis 33, Franz 40, Kennedy 62, 72)
Hertha Berlin 0 Att: 30,600

Koln 1 (Yahia og 24)
Bochum 1 (Klimowicz 18) Att: 50,000

Monchengladbach 1 (Dante 57)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Blaszczykowski 64) Att: 54,067

Schalke 2 (Krstajic 30, Farfan 34)
1899 Hoffenheim 3 (Ba 27, Carlos Eduardo 49, pen 89) Att: 61,673

Wolfsburg 5 (Misimovic 6, Grafite 15, 56, Prodl og 26, Dzeko 74)
Werder Bremen 1 (Diego 31) Att: 30,000

GERMANY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wolfsburg	34	21	6	7	80	41	69
Bayern	34	20	7	7	71	42	67
Stuttgart	34	19	7	8	63	43	64
Hertha Berlin	34	19	6	9	48	41	63
Hamburg	34	19	4	11	49	47	61
B Dortmund	34	15	14	5	60	37	59
Hoffenheim	34	15	10	9	63	49	55
Schalke	34	14	8	12	47	35	50
B Leverkusen	34	14	7	13	59	46	49
Werder	34	12	9	13	64	50	45
Hannover	34	10	10	14	49	69	40
Koln	34	11	6	17	35	50	39
E Frankfurt	34	8	9	17	39	60	33
Bochum	34	7	11	16	39	55	32
M'gladbach	34	8	7	19	39	62	31
E Cottbus	34	8	6	20	30	57	30
Karlsruhe (R)	34	8	5	21	30	54	29
A Bielefeld (R)	34	4	16	14	29	56	28

TOP GOALSCORERS
28 Grafite (Wolfsburg)
26 Edin Dzeko (Wolfsburg)
24 Mario Gomez (Stuttgart)
21 Patrick Helmes (Bayer Leverkusen)
18 Vedad Ibisevic (1899 Hoffenheim)
17 Claudio Pizarro (Werder Bremen)

Promoted: Freiburg, Mainz

HOLLAND

May 3: PSV 1 NEC 1; Roda JC 0 Willem II 1; Heerenveen 2 Den Haag 2; Volendam 0 Groningen 1; Twente 3 AZ 0; Utrecht 2 Feyenoord 2; NAC 0 De Graafschap 1; Sparta 4 Ajax 0; Vitesse 1 Heracles 0.
May 10: Heracles 1 Utrecht 1; AZ 3 Heerenveen 1; NEC 1 Sparta 1; Groningen 1 NAC 0; De Graafschap 2 Volendam 2; Den Haag 3 Vitesse 1; Willem II 0 PSV 3; Feyenoord 2 Roda JC 3; Ajax 1 Twente 0.

New role...Ketsbaia

three years in England with Blackburn Rovers.

HUNGARY

Debrecen do it again

Debrecen captured their fourth championship in the last five years when they won 3-2 away to Diosgyor.

Fehervar retained the League Cup by beating second-tier Pecsi Mecsek 3-1 in the Final.

ICELAND

Champions lose out

Last year's league champions FH Hafnarfjordur beat Cup winners KR Reykjavik 3-1 in the Super Cup Final.

FH have lost four of last season's squad – Jonas Grani Gardarsson, Hoskuldur Eiriksson, and twins Arnar and Bjarki Gunnlaugsson – with Norwegian striker Alexander Soderlund joining on loan from Treviso of Italy.

The Icelandic FA has concluded a deal with Pepsi to sponsor the league for the next three seasons, filling the gap created by the collapse of the former Landsbanki bank.

ISRAEL

Haifa triumph

Maccabi Haifa clinched their 11th league title when they beat Maccabi Netanya 2-0.

Winning start...Gardarsson

HOLLAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AZ	34	25	5	4	66	22	80
Twente	34	20	9	5	62	31	69
Ajax	34	21	5	8	74	41	68
PSV	34	19	8	7	71	33	65
Heerenveen	34	17	9	8	66	57	60
Groningen	34	17	5	12	53	36	56
Feyenoord	34	12	9	13	54	46	45
NAC	34	13	6	15	44	54	45
Utrecht	34	11	11	12	41	44	44
Vitesse	34	11	10	13	41	48	43
NEC	34	9	15	10	41	40	42
Willem II	34	10	7	17	35	58	37
Sparta	34	9	8	17	46	66	35
Den Haag	34	8	8	18	41	58	32
Heracles	34	7	11	16	35	53	32
Roda JC	34	7	9	18	38	58	30
De Graafschap	34	7	9	18	24	58	30
Volendam (R)	34	7	8	19	38	67	29

Promoted: VVV-Venlo

HUNGARY

Apr 28: Zalaegerszeg 2 Gyor 7; Paks 0 Fehervar 1; Diosgyor 1 Nyiregyhaza 0; Honved 0 Siofok 2; Kaposvar 2 Szombathely 3; Rakospalota 0 Debrecen 4; Vasas 1 Kecskemet 2.
Apr 29: MTK 3 Ujpest 2.
May 1: Gyor 1 Vasas 1; Nyiregyhaza 2 Paks 2; Fehervar 1 Zalaegerszeg 1; Kecskemet 5 Rakospalota 3; Debrecen 4 Kaposvar 1; Szombathely 1 Honved 0.
May 2: Siofok 0 MTK 1.
May 3: Ujpest 2 Diosgyor 2.
May 5: Szombathely 2 Fehervar 1; Honved 0 MTK 3.
May 6: Ujpest 3 Vasas 1; Kaposvar 1 Diosgyor 0; Rakospalota 1 Paks 2; Kecskemet 2 Zalaegerszeg 0; Debrecen 2 Gyor 2; Siofok 3 Nyiregyhaza 1.
May 8: MTK 0 Szombathely 1.
May 9: Honved 0 Debrecen 1; Vasas 1 Rakospalota 1; Kaposvar 2 Kecskemet 1; Diosgyor 0 Siofok 1; Paks 3 Ujpest 1; Zalaegerszeg 2 Nyiregyhaza 0; Gyor 1 Fehervar 2.
May 13: Gyor 3 Szombathely 3.
May 15: Ujpest 2 Zalaegerszeg 1.
May 16: Kecskemet 3 Honved 1; Rakospalota 3 Kaposvar 3; Nyiregyhaza 1 Gyor 1; Siofok 1 Paks 2; Szombathely 1 Diosgyor 0; Fehervar 2 Vasas 2.
May 17: Debrecen 2 MTK 2.
May 22: Diosgyor 2 Debrecen 3.
May 23: Gyor 4 Ujpest 3; Vasas 2 Kaposvar 1; Honved 1 Rakospalota 0; MTK 1 Kecskemet 4; Paks 0 Szombathely 2; Zalaegerszeg 5 Siofok 3; Fehervar 2 Nyiregyhaza 0.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Debrecen	29	20	5	4	68	29	65
Ujpest	29	17	8	4	60	36	59
Szombathely	29	16	5	8	43	27	53
Zalaegerszeg	29	14	7	8	50	43	49
Kecskemet	29	13	6	10	53	44	45
Fehervar	29	13	6	10	40	33	45
Gyor	29	11	10	8	55	38	43
MTK	29	12	6	11	39	41	42
Vasas	29	11	5	13	41	49	38
Kaposvar	29	10	7	12	48	45	37
Paks	29	9	8	12	38	49	35
Diosgyor	29	9	6	14	29	43	33
Honved	29	8	8	13	30	43	32
Nyiregyhaza	29	6	11	12	29	40	29
Siofok	29	7	2	20	27	54	23
Rakospalota	29	3	6	20	33	69	15

ISRAEL

May 2: Maccabi Petach Tikva 0 Ramat Gan 2; Maccabi Tel Aviv 0 Netanya 1; Ashdod 0 Bnei Yehuda 3; Ironi Kiryat Shmona 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 3; Hapoel Petach Tikva 0 Beitar 0.
May 4: Bnei Sakhnin 0 Maccabi Haifa 0.
May 9: Maccabi Haifa 2 Ramat Gan 0; Netanya 1 Ironi Kiryat Shmona 3; Bnei Yehuda 2 Hapoel Petach Tikva 1; Maccabi Petach Tikva 0 Ashdod 0; Beitar 2 Maccabi Tel Aviv 0.
May 11: Hapoel Tel Aviv 1 Bnei Sakhnin 1.
May 16: Maccabi Tel Aviv 2 Bnei Yehuda 1; Bnei Sakhnin 0 Netanya 0; Ramat Gan 0 Ashdod 0; Ironi Kiryat Shmona 2 Beitar 0; Hapoel Petach Tikva 2 Maccabi Petach Tikva 0.
May 18: Maccabi Haifa 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 0.
May 23: Beitar 3 Bnei Sakhnin 0; Bnei Yehuda 0 Ironi Kiryat Shmona 0; Maccabi Petach Tikva 0 Maccabi Tel Aviv 3; Netanya 0 Maccabi Haifa 2; Ashdod 1 Hapoel Petach Tikva 0.
May 25: Hapoel Tel Aviv 3 Ramat Gan 2.

ISRAEL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
M Haifa	32	19	9	4	48	23	66
H Tel Aviv	32	17	10	5	48	26	61
Beitar*	32	16	11	5	46	27	56
Netanya	32	13	12	7	38	31	51
Bnei Yehuda	32	14	7	11	37	28	49
M Tel Aviv	32	10	11	11	35	35	41
Ashdod	32	10	8	14	41	47	38
M P Tikva	32	7	15	10	24	32	36
H P Tikva	32	8	7	17	30	41	31
Bnei Sakhnin	32	6	12	14	23	40	30
Ironi K S	32	6	9	17	23	42	27
Ramat Gan	32	5	11	16	25	46	26

**3pts deducted – 2 for crowd trouble last season, 1 for fans' racist behaviour during game in April*

ITALY

Saturday, May 2
Bologna 1 (Moras 87)
Reggina 2 (Brienza 40, Barreto 46) Att: 18,300

Inter 2 (Ibrahimovic 58, Muntari 71)
Lazio 0 Att: 58,570

Sunday, May 3
Catania 0
Milan 2 (Inzaghi 27, Kaka 52) Att: 20,285

Fiorentina 1 (Vargas 57)
Torino 0 Att: 31,218

Genoa 3 (Milito 30, 73, 90)
Sampdoria 1 (Campagnaro 45) Att: 32,203

Juventus 2 (Nedved 54, 67)
Lecce 2 (Konan 11, Castillo 90) Att: 21,809

Palermo 5 (Migliaccio 29, Miccoli 38, Tedesco 50, Cavani 57, Succi 87)
Cagliari 1 (Jeda 48) Att: 27,845

Roma 0
Chievo 0 Att: 33,821

Siena 2 (Kharja 11, Maccarone 25)
Napoli 1 (Pia 80) Att: 9,842

Udinese 3 (Quagliarella 42, 74, Pasquale 90)
Atalanta 0 Att: 16,305

Saturday, May 9
Lazio 1 (Rocchi 56)
Udinese 3 (Floro Flores 60, D'Agostino 69, Quagliarella pen 86) Att: 29,000

Sampdoria 5 (Dessena 1, 31, Delvecchio 37, Marilungo 46, Pazzini 50)
Reggina 0 Att: 23,000

Sunday, May 10
Atalanta 1 (Valdes 9)
Genoa 1 (Criscito 90) Att: 10,812

Cagliari 2 (Matri 34, Acquafresca 58)
Roma 2 (Totti 63, Perrotta 68) Att: 18,000

Catania 0
Fiorentina 2 (Jovetic 11, Zauri 90) Att: 18,142

Chievo 2 (Marcolini 27, Luciano 73)
Inter 2 (Crespo 3, Balotelli 65) Att: 28,924

Lecce 1 (Zanchetta pen 43)
Napoli 1 (Pia 33) Att: 14,511

Milan 1 (Seedorf 57)
Juventus 1 (Iaquinta 60) Att: 78,979

Siena 1 (Calaio 60)
Palermo 0 Att: 9,478

Torino 1 (Rosina pen 37)
Bologna 1 (Di Vaio pen 86) Att: 23,228

Saturday, May 16
Roma 4 (Perrotta 13, 31, Vucinic 17, Panucci 90)
Catania 3 (Tedesco 15, Mascara 47, Morimoto 72) Att: 31,728

Udinese 2 (D'Agostino pen 31, Zapata 49)
Milan 1 (Ambrosini 90) Att: 25,000

Sunday, May 17
Bologna 2 (Di Vaio 37, Volpi 90)
Lecce 1 (Tiribocchi 30) Att: 26,490

Fiorentina 1 (Gilardino 21)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 37,825

Genoa 2 (Milito pen 58, Olivera 71)
Chievo 2 (Pinzi 35, Pellissier 85) Att: 25,008

Inter 3 (Cambiasso 44, Balotelli 52, Ibrahimovic 76)
Siena 0 Att: 80,000

Juventus 2 (Iaquinta 26, Zanetti 36)
Atalanta 2 (Cigarini 2, Pellegrino 44)
Played behind closed doors

Napoli 1 (Pia 42)
Torino 2 (Bianchi 51, Rosina 72) Att: 30,091

Palermo 2 (Miccoli pen 6, Migliaccio 87)
Lazio 0 Att: 29,480

Reggina 2 (Ceravolo 26, Brienza 49)
Cagliari 1 (Lazzari 18) Att: 9,786

Wednesday, May 20
Lazio 1 (Zarate 26)
Reggina 0 Att: 31,103

Sunday, May 24
Atalanta 2 (Plasmati 50, 67)
Palermo 2 (Succi 32, Miccoli 75) Att: 10,669

Cagliari 2 (Cossu 34, Acquafresca 71)
Inter 1 (Ibrahimovic 8) Att: 22,000

Catania 3 (Morimoto 42, Mascara pen 88, Falconieri 90)
Napoli 1 (Bogliacino 28) Att: 17,408

Chievo 0
Bologna 0 Att: 16,763

Lecce 1 (Tiribocchi 50)
Fiorentina 1 (Jorgensen 90) Att: 7,608

Milan 2 (Ambrosini 75, 81)
Roma 3 (Riise 36, Menez 80, Totti 85) Att: 72,681

STANDINGS ON MAY 24

POS		TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Diego Forlan	Atletico Madrid (Spa)	31	2	62
2	Marc Janko	Salzburg (Aut)	39	1.5	58.5
3	Samuel Eto'o	Barcelona (Spa)	29	2	58
4	Grafite	Wolfsburg (Ger)	28	2	56
5	Edin Dzeko	Wolfsburg (Ger)	26	2	52
	David Villa	Valencia (Spa)	26	2	52
7	Andre-Pierre Gignac	Toulouse (Fra)	24	2	48
	Mario Gomez	Stuttgart (Ger)	24	2	48
9	Marco Di Vaio	Bologna (Ita)	23	2	46
	Zlatan Ibrahimovic	Internazionale (Ita)	23	2	46
	Lionel Messi	Barcelona (Spa)	23	2	46

LIECHTENSTEIN

Vaduz make it a dozen

Vaduz won the Cup for the 12th consecutive season with a 2-1 victory over Eschen/Mauren to qualify for next season's Europa League.

LITHUANIA

Radavicius wins it

Suduva clinched their place in the second-qualifying round of the Europa League after Ramunas Radavicius' goal was enough to beat Tauras in the Cup Final.

Pole position...Lech Poznan

LUXEMBOURG

Swift victory sends Dudelange to Europe

Dudelange confirmed their fifth consecutive title with a 1-0 win at Swift Hesperange. Christophe Walter scored the only goal of the game in the 89th minute to gain his side a place in the first-qualifying round of the Champions League.

MONTENEGRO

Luka's late winner

A solitary goal from Luka Rotkovic, two minutes from the end of extra-time, secured the Cup for Petrovac against FK Lovcen and earned a place in next year's Europa League.

POLAND

Lech lift the Cup

Slawomir Peszko scored the only goal as Lech Poznan beat Ruch Chorzow 1-0 to win the Cup for a fifth time.

PORTUGAL

More success for Porto

Porto clinched their fourth successive league title with a 1-0 win against Nacional.

Sampdoria 2 (Isla og 32, Cassano pen 44)
Udinese 2 (D'Agostino pen 13, Felipe 61) Att: 21,937

Siena 0
Juventus 3 (Del Piero 18, 89, Marchisio 37) Att: 15,337

Torino 2 (Franceschini 40, Bianchi 49)
Genoa 3 (Milito pen 32, 89, Olivera 48) Att: 23,982

ITALY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	37	24	9	4	66	29	81
Milan	37	21	8	8	68	35	71
Juventus	37	20	11	6	67	37	71
Fiorentina	37	21	5	11	53	36	68
Genoa	37	18	11	8	52	38	65
Roma	37	17	9	11	61	59	60
Palermo	37	17	5	15	55	48	56
Udinese	37	15	10	12	55	48	55
Cagliari	37	15	8	14	47	44	53
Lazio	37	15	5	17	46	53	50
Atalanta	37	13	8	16	42	44	47
Sampdoria	37	11	12	14	47	50	45
Napoli	37	11	10	16	40	45	43
Catania	37	12	7	18	40	48	43
Siena	37	12	7	18	32	43	43
Chievo	37	8	14	15	35	46	38
Bologna	37	8	10	19	40	61	34
Torino	37	8	10	19	35	58	34
Lecce	37	5	15	17	36	63	30
Reggina	37	6	12	19	29	61	30

LEADING GOALSCORERS

23 Marco Di Vaio (Bologna)
23 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Inter)
22 Diego Milito (Genoa)
19 Alberto Gilardino (Fiorentina)
15 Kaka (Milan)

ITALIAN CUP – Final

May 13 - Rome
Lazio 1 (Zarate 4)
Sampdoria 1 (Pazzini 31)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 67,000.
Ref: Rosetti
Lazio 6-5 on pens

LATVIA

Apr 29: Blazma 1 Jurmala 2.
Apr 30: Daugava 1 Skonto 7; Ventspils 1 Metalurgs 1.
May 4: Dinaburg 1 Blazma 0; Metalurgs 1 Daugava 0.
May 6: Jurmala 4 Tranzits 2; Skonto 2 Olimps/RFS 0.
May 10: Metalurgs 5 Olimps/RFS 1; Dinaburg 2 Tranzits 0; Skonto 4 Blazma 0; Ventspils 4 Daugava 2.
May 13: Tranzits 1 Skonto 1; Olimps/RFS 1 Ventspils 5; Jurmala 1 Dinaburg 0.
May 14: Blazma 0 Metalurgs 3.
May 25: Dinaburg 2 Olimps/RFS 1.

LATVIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Metalurgs	10	8	2	0	26	5	26
Ventspils	10	7	3	0	28	8	24
Skonto	10	7	1	2	29	11	22
Dinaburg	10	4	2	4	10	11	14
Jurmala	9	4	2	3	12	14	14
Olimps/RFS	10	3	1	6	10	17	10
Tranzits	10	0	6	4	8	14	6
Daugava	9	0	3	6	9	27	3
Blazma	10	0	2	8	3	28	2

MACEDONIA

Apr 29: Napredok 1 Pobeda 1; Pelister 2 Metalurg 2; Turnovo 1 Renova 1; Rabotnicki 2 Milano 0.
Apr 30: Vardar 0 Sileks 2.
May 2: Makedonija 1 Turnovo 0.
May 3: Renova 1 Rabotnicki 0; Sileks 4 Napredok 2; Milano 1 Vardar 0; Pobeda 2 Pelister 1.
May 9: Vardar 0 Renova 0.
May 10: Milano 3 Sileks 2; Rabotnicki 0 Makedonija 1; Turnovo 1 Metalurg 1; Pelister 3 Napredok 1.
May 17: Sileks 1 Pelister 0; Pobeda 2 Turnovo 0; Metalurg 0 Rabotnicki 1; Makedonija 0 Vardar 0; Renova 4 Milano 1.

MACEDONIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Makedonija	28	17	9	2	45	12	60
Renova	28	14	10	4	38	23	52
Milano	28	15	4	9	45	35	49
Rabotnicki	28	11	8	9	37	25	41
Vardar	28	10	11	7	33	22	41
Sileks	29	9	8	12	36	39	35
Turnovo	28	8	9	11	21	37	33
Pobeda	28	8	7	13	30	44	31
Metalurg	28	6	11	11	25	33	29
Pelister	29	7	6	16	23	40	27
Napredok	28	4	9	15	26	49	21

MOLDOVA

May 3: Iskra-Stal 0 Olimpia 0; Zimbru 3 Dinamo 1; Dacia 3 Nistru 0; Sheriff 2 Tiligul 0.
May 4: Academia 0 FC Tiraspol 1.
May 6: Dinamo 0 Iskra-Stal 3; Nistru 2 Zimbru 0; Tiligul 0 Dacia 1; FC Tiraspol 0 Sheriff 2; CSCA-Rapid 1 Academia 0.
May 13: Sheriff 4 CSCA-Rapid 1; Dacia 1 FC Tiraspol 0; Zimbru 3 Tiligul 2; Iskra-Stal 2 Nistru 0; Olimpia 1 Dinamo 2.
May 17: Nistru 1 Olimpia 3; Tiligul 1 Iskra-Stal 2; FC Tiraspol 1 Zimbru 1; CSCA-Rapid 0 Dacia 0; Academia 3 Sheriff 3.

MOLDOVA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheriff	30	25	3	2	61	15	78
Dacia	30	20	3	7	47	17	63
Iskra-Stal	30	14	10	6	28	15	52
Zimbru	30	13	7	10	42	30	46
Dinamo	30	11	9	10	42	45	42
Olimpia	30	11	7	12	30	32	40
FC Tiraspol	30	9	5	16	30	36	32
Nistru	30	8	6	16	30	43	30
CSCA-Rapid	30	7	8	15	28	47	29
Tiligul	30	7	4	19	24	60	25
Academia (R)	30	6	6	18	27	49	24

NORWAY

Apr 30: Brann 3 Lillestrom 1.
May 2: Aalesund 0 Molde 2.
May 3: Valerenga 2 Start 3; Sandefjord 1 Stromsgodset 0; Viking 3 Bodo/Glimt 2; Tromso 1 Odd Grenland 1; Stabaek 0 Lyn 0; Rosenborg 1 Fredrikstad 0.
May 6: Sandefjord 3 Viking 1; Molde 0 Valerenga 3; Bodo/Glimt 2 Stabaek 1; Stromsgodset 2 Aalesund 0; Start 3 Lillestrom 0; Lyn 1 Rosenborg 1.
May 7: Fredrikstad 3 Tromso 0.
May 9: Odd Grenland 3 Brann 1.
May 16: Brann 1 Start 1; Valerenga 2 Fredrikstad 1; Stabaek 4 Sandefjord 1; Lillestrom 1 Odd Grenland 1; Tromso 0 Bodo/Glimt 0; Aalesund 2 Lyn 0; Viking 1 Stromsgodset 1; Rosenborg 2 Molde 2.
May 19: Sandefjord 2 Rosenborg 2.
May 21: Molde 1 Tromso 1; Fredrikstad 2 Brann 4; Start 1 Odd Grenland 1; Viking 2 Stabaek 2; Stromsgodset 1 Lillestrom 2; Bodo/Glimt 3 Aalesund 0; Lyn 4 Valerenga 4.
May 24: Odd Grenland 2 Fredrikstad 0; Lillestrom 2 Sandefjord 1; Tromso 1 Lyn 0; Start 4 Bodo/Glimt 0; Valerenga 1 Stromsgodset 0; Rosenborg 1 Viking 0.
May 25: Aalesund 1 Stabaek 0.

NORWAY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rosenborg	11	6	5	0	20	11	23
Start	11	5	5	1	22	12	20
Odd Grenland	11	4	6	1	20	15	18
Molde	10	5	3	2	16	12	18
Valerenga	11	4	4	3	20	20	16
Sandefjord	11	4	4	3	16	16	16
Aalesund	11	4	3	4	12	15	15
Tromso	11	3	5	3	16	18	14
Brann	10	3	4	3	17	17	13
Viking	11	3	4	4	14	14	13
Bodo/Glimt	11	3	3	5	11	17	12
Stabaek	11	2	5	4	15	15	11
Fredrikstad	11	3	2	6	12	14	11
Lillestrom	11	2	4	5	12	19	10
Lyn	11	1	6	4	10	13	9
Stromsgodset	11	2	3	6	9	14	9

POLAND

May 1: Belchatow 3 Polonia Bytom 1; Piast 1 Wisla 1.
May 2: Arka 3 Slask 3; Legia 1 LKS 0; Jagiellonia 1 Odra 2; Gornik 2 Lechia 0.
May 3: Cracovia 1 Polonia Warsaw 0; Lech 1 Ruch 1.
May 8: Lechia 3 Jagiellonia 1; Polonia Bytom 2 Arka 1.
May 9: Polonia Warsaw 1 Belchatow 0; Slask 0 Lech 2; LKS 2 Gornik 0; Odra 2 Cracovia 1.
May 10: Ruch 0 Piast 0; Wisla 1 Legia 0.
May 15: Arka 1 Ruch 2; Lech 1 Lechia 0.
May 16: Jagiellonia 2 Polonia Warsaw 1; Gornik 2 Odra 0; Legia 3 Polonia Bytom 1; Cracovia 1 Belchatow 0.
May 17: Piast 0 Slask 1; LKS 0 Wisla 4.
May 23: Cracovia 0 Gornik 0; Polonia Warsaw 3 Lech 3; Belchatow 1 Arka 1; Odra 0 Piast 2; Ruch 2 LKS 0; Lechia 2 Wisla 4; Slask 1 Legia 1; Polonia Bytom 1 Jagiellonia 0.

POLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla	29	18	7	4	51	21	61
Legia	29	17	7	5	48	16	58
Lech	29	16	10	3	49	22	58
Polonia W	29	14	9	6	39	23	51
Belchatow	29	16	3	10	38	28	51
Slask	29	11	12	6	40	32	45
Polonia B	29	10	5	14	30	44	35
Jagiellonia	29	9	7	13	28	32	34
Ruch	29	9	7	13	21	28	34
Piast	29	9	6	14	17	24	33
Odra	29	8	8	13	22	38	32
LKS	29	9	5	15	25	43	32
Gornik	29	7	8	14	20	32	29
Lechia	29	8	5	16	28	44	29
Cracovia	29	7	8	14	22	38	29
Arka	29	6	9	14	25	38	27

PORTUGAL

May 1: Rio Ave 0 Sporting Braga 0.
May 2: Academica 0 Sporting Lisbon 0; Nacional 3 Benfica 1.
May 3: Estrela Amadora 2 Leixoes 1; Guimaraes 1 Naval 0; Setubal 2 Pacos Ferreira 1; Maritimo 0 Porto 3.
May 4: Trofense 2 Belenenses 1.
May 8: Guimaraes 0 Rio Ave 1.
May 9: Benfica 2 Trofense 2; Sporting Lisbon 2 Setubal 1.
May 10: Pacos Ferreira 2 Maritimo 1; Naval 0 Estrela Amadora 0; Leixoes 0 Academica 1; Porto 1 Nacional 0.
May 11: Belenenses 0 Sporting Braga 5.
May 16: Belenenses 1 Rio Ave 0; Trofense 1 Porto 4; Maritimo 1 Sporting Lisbon 2; Setubal 0 Leixoes 1; Academica 3 Naval 1; Estrela Amadora 1 Guimaraes 0.
May 17: Sporting Braga 1 Benfica 3; Nacional 1 Pacos Ferreira 0.
May 23: Benfica 3 Belenenses 1; Pacos Ferreira 1 Trofense 0; Leixoes 1 Maritimo 0; Naval 2 Setubal 2; Guimaraes 3 Academica 2; Rio Ave 2 Estrela Amadora 1.
May 24: Porto 1 Sporting Braga 1; Sporting Lisbon 3 Nacional 1.

PORTUGAL – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	30	21	7	2	61	18	70
Sporting L	30	20	6	4	45	20	66
Benfica	30	17	8	5	54	32	59
Nacional	30	15	7	8	47	32	52
S Braga	30	13	11	6	38	21	50
Leixoes	30	12	9	9	30	31	45
Academica	30	10	9	11	28	32	39
Guimaraes	30	10	8	12	32	36	38
Maritimo	30	9	10	11	35	36	37
P Ferreira	30	9	7	14	37	42	34
E Amadora	30	8	10	12	26	38	34
Rio Ave	30	8	6	16	20	35	30
Naval	30	7	8	15	25	39	29
Setubal	30	7	5	18	21	46	26
Belenenses (R)	30	5	9	16	28	52	24
Trofense (R)	30	5	8	17	25	42	23

Promoted: Olhanense, Uniao Leiria

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

May 1: Cork 1 Sligo 0; Galway 2 St Patrick's 1; Bohemians 5 Dundalk 0; Drogheda 0 Derry 3; Shamrock 0 Bray 1.
May 8: Bray 0 Drogheda 1; Derry 3 Bohemians 2; Dundalk 1 Galway 0.
May 9: St Patrick's 0 Cork 3; Sligo 0 Shamrock 3.
May 15: Galway 3 Bray 0; Cork 1 Derry 0; Drogheda 1 Dundalk 1; St Patrick's 2 Sligo 2.
May 16: Shamrock 2 Bohemians 1.
May 22: Bray 0 Cork 2; Bohemians 1 Drogheda 0; Dundalk 0 St Patrick's 1; Derry 0 Shamrock 0.
May 23: Sligo 2 Galway 0.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cork	13	9	2	2	17	7	29
Bohemians	13	8	2	3	21	7	26
Derry	13	6	4	3	18	11	22
Shamrock	13	6	4	3	17	11	22
Galway	13	5	3	5	14	13	18
St Patrick's	13	5	1	7	11	21	16
Sligo	13	3	5	5	11	15	14
Dundalk	13	4	2	7	11	16	14
Bray	13	2	5	6	9	17	11
Drogheda	13	1	4	8	5	16	7

On his way...Rober

52 Scottish league titles that Rangers have now won

RUSSIA

Saturn seek new start

Coach Jurgen Rober has parted company with Saturn after their disappointing start to the league season.

Zenit St Petersburg will be without Portugal midfielder Danny for the rest of the year after he tore cruciate ligaments in his knee in training.

SAN MARINO

Europa League awaits

Juvenes-Dogana earned a place in the Europa League with a 2-1 win against Domagnano in the Cup Final.

SCOTLAND

Another title for Gers

Rangers sealed the domestic championship with a 3-0 victory away to Dundee United. Gordon Strachan, coach of runners-up Celtic, resigned the next day.

Meanwhile, Motherwell will play in next season's Europa League after being awarded a Fair Play place by the Scottish FA.

Champions...Rangers celebrate

ROMANIA

May 1: Urziceni 3 Gloria Bistrita 0; Steaua 5 Otelul 0.
May 2: Gaz Metan 1 Rapid 0; Brasov 2 Poli Iasi 0; Otopeni 2 Gloria Buzau 0; Timisoara 3 Farul 2; Dinamo 1 CFR 0.
May 3: Arges 0 Vaslui 0; Pandurii 1 Univ Craiova 0.
May 5: Otelul 0 Dinamo 1; Gloria Bistrita 1 Brasov 0; Farul 0 Urziceni 1; Gloria Buzau 0 Steaua 1.
May 6: Poli Iasi 4 Arges 0; Rapid 3 Otopeni 0; Vaslui 1 Pandurii 0; Univ Craiova 2 Gaz Metan 0; CFR 2 Timisoara 0.
May 8: Brasov 2 Farul 1; Steaua 1 Dinamo 1.
May 9: Gaz Metan 1 Vaslui 2; Timisoara 1 Otelul 0; Pandurii 1 Poli Iasi 1; Gloria Buzau 0 Rapid 1.
May 10: Otopeni 0 Univ Craiova 1; Arges 2 Gloria Bistrita 1; Urziceni 1 CFR 1.
May 15: Univ Craiova 1 Gloria Buzau 1; Steaua 1 Rapid 2.
May 16: Poli Iasi 2 Gaz Metan 0; Gloria Bistrita 1 Pandurii 0; Farul 2 Arges 0; CFR 2 Brasov 0.
May 17: Vaslui 2 Otopeni 0; Otelul 0 Urziceni 2; Dinamo 3 Timisoara 1.
May 22: Brasov 1 Otelul 1; Timisoara 1 Steaua 0.
May 23: Gloria Buzau 4 Vaslui 1; Gaz Metan 3 Gloria Bistrita 1; Otopeni 4 Poli Iasi 1; Rapid 0 Univ Craiova 3.
May 24: Arges 0 CFR 2; Pandurii 0 Farul 0; Urziceni 1 Dinamo 0.

ROMANIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Urziceni	32	20	6	6	48	18	66
Dinamo	32	20	5	7	54	23	65
Timisoara*	32	20	7	5	57	35	61
CFR	32	16	10	6	43	23	58
Univ Craiova	32	15	11	6	43	22	56
Rapid	32	16	6	10	42	31	54
Steaua	32	13	13	6	41	25	52
Vaslui	32	15	6	11	42	37	51
Brasov	32	12	13	7	32	25	49
Arges	32	11	8	13	36	43	41
Pandurii	32	10	9	13	25	35	39
Otelul	32	10	7	15	35	47	37
Gloria Bistrita	32	10	5	17	28	41	35
Poli Iasi	32	10	5	17	29	44	35
Gaz Metan	32	9	6	17	34	49	33
Farul	32	7	6	19	25	50	27
Otopeni	32	4	7	21	25	51	19
Gloria Buzau	32	3	4	25	20	60	13

6pts deducted for non-compliance with CAS ruling relating to club identity

RUSSIA

May 2: Tom 2 Terek 1; Spartak Moscow 0 Dynamo 2; Amkar 0 FC Moscow 1; Saturn 0 Rubin 5.
May 3: Krylia Sovetov 1 CSKA 3; Rostov 2 Zenit 1; Lokomotiv 1 Spartak Nalchik 0; Khimki 2 Kuban 2.
May 10: Dynamo 1 CSKA 2; Terek 2 Amkar 2; Zenit 2 Krylia 0; FC Moscow 0 Lokomotiv 0.
May 11: Rubin 4 Tom 0; Spartak Moscow 4 Saturn 0; Spartak Nalchik 0 Khimki 0; Kuban 0 Rostov 0.
May 16: Amkar 2 Rubin 2; Lokomotiv 4 Terek 0; Rostov 1 Spartak Nalchik 1; Khimki 1 FC Moscow 1.
May 17: Tom 1 Spartak Moscow 1; Krylia Sovetov 1 Kuban 0; Saturn 0 Dynamo 0; CSKA 2 Zenit 1.
May 23: Rubin 2 Lokomotiv 0; Spartak Moscow 5 Amkar 1; Saturn 0 Tom 0; Terek 2 Khimki 0.
May 24: Spartak Nalchik 0 Krylia Sovetov 1; Kuban 1 CSKA 0; Dynamo 1 Zenit 0; FC Moscow 2 Rostov 0.

RUSSIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rubin	10	6	3	1	21	5	21
CSKA	10	6	1	3	18	8	19
FC Moscow	10	5	4	1	10	4	19
Krylia Sovetov	10	6	1	3	10	7	19
Spartak M	10	5	2	3	18	9	17
Dynamo	10	5	1	4	9	9	16
Zenit	10	4	3	3	15	10	15
Rostov	10	3	5	2	7	7	14
Lokomotiv	10	3	4	3	11	11	13
Kuban	10	3	3	4	6	9	12
Terek	10	3	3	4	9	13	12
Tom	10	3	3	4	6	12	12
Amkar	10	1	5	4	7	15	8
Spartak N	10	1	4	5	6	9	7
Saturn	10	1	4	5	5	18	7
Khimki	10	0	4	6	8	20	4

SCOTLAND

Championship group

May 2: Aberdeen 1 Celtic 3; Hibernian 1 Dundee United 2.
May 3: Rangers 2 Hearts 0.
May 7: Hearts 0 Hibernian 1; Dundee United 1 Aberdeen 1.
May 8: Rangers 1 Celtic 0.
May 12: Celtic 2 Dundee United 1; Aberdeen 0 Hearts 0.
May 13: Hibernian 1 Rangers 1.
May 16: Rangers 2 Aberdeen 1; Hearts 3 Dundee United 0.
May 17: Hibernian 0 Celtic 0.
May 24: Aberdeen 2 Hibernian 1; Celtic 0 Hearts 0; Dundee United 0 Rangers 3.

SCOTLAND – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	38	26	8	4	77	28	86
Celtic	38	24	10	4	80	33	82
Hearts	38	16	11	11	40	37	59
Aberdeen	38	14	11	13	41	40	53
Dundee Utd	38	13	14	11	47	50	53
Hibernian	38	11	14	13	42	46	47

Relegation group

May 2: St Mirren 1 Inverness 2; Hamilton 2 Kilmarnock 1; Falkirk 2 Motherwell 1.
May 9: Kilmarnock 1 Falkirk 1; St Mirren 1 Motherwell 3.
May 10: Inverness 1 Hamilton 1.
May 13: Motherwell 2 Inverness 2; Kilmarnock 2 St Mirren 1; Hamilton 0 Falkirk 1.
May 16: Falkirk 0 St Mirren 2; Hamilton 0 Motherwell 3; Kilmarnock 1 Inverness 0.
May 23: Inverness 0 Falkirk 1; Motherwell 1 Kilmarnock 2; St Mirren 0 Hamilton 1.

SCOTLAND – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Motherwell	38	13	9	16	46	51	48
Kilmarnock	38	12	8	18	38	48	44
Hamilton	38	12	5	21	30	53	41
Falkirk	38	9	11	18	37	52	38
St Mirren	38	9	10	19	33	52	37
Inverness (R)	38	10	7	21	37	58	37

Promoted: St Johnstone

SERBIA

May 2: OFK 1 Red Star 1; Javor 1 Banat 1; Jagodina 1 Cukaricki 2; Borac 0 Vojvodina 3.
May 3: Rad 0 Napredak 1; Hajduk 1 Partizan 2.
May 9: Cukaricki 0 Rad 1; Javor 1 Borac 1; Vojvodina 6 OFK 1; Red Star 3 Hajduk 0.
May 10: Banat 1 Napredak 0; Partizan 1 Jagodina 2.
May 16: Borac 2 Banat 0; Jagodina 1 Red Star 5; Napredak 0 Cukaricki 0; Rad 1 Partizan 5.
May 17: Hajduk 0 Vojvodina 0.
May 21: OFK 1 Javor 1.
May 23: Partizan 2 Napredak 1.
May 24: Borac 2 OFK 1; Red Star 3 Rad 2; Banat 0 Cukaricki 0; Javor 3 Hajduk 0; Vojvodina 1 Jagodina 0.

SERBIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	32	24	5	3	62	15	77
Vojvodina	32	18	6	8	44	23	60
Red Star	32	17	7	8	57	30	58
Javor	32	12	14	6	37	26	50
Borac	32	9	13	10	27	33	40
Napredak	32	10	7	15	26	35	37
Cukaricki	32	9	8	15	30	38	35
Rad	32	7	14	11	25	33	35
Hajduk	32	8	11	13	21	33	35
Jagodina	32	10	4	18	27	45	34
Banat	32	7	10	15	20	38	31
OFK	32	7	9	16	26	53	30

SLOVAKIA

May 2: Slovan 2 Artmedia 0; Banska Bystrica 3 Dubnica 0; Ruzomberok 0 Dunajska Streda 0; Kosice 2 Zlate Moravce 0; Nitra 0 Tatran 0.
May 3: Spartak 1 Zilina 1.
May 9: Artmedia 3 Kosice 2; Tatran 2 Dubnica 3; Dunajska Streda 1 Banska Bystrica 3; Zlate Moravce 0 Ruzomberok 3.
May 10: Zilina 0 Slovan 1.
May 13: Slovan 3 Nitra 1; Spartak 0 Tatran 3; Banska Bystrica 2 Zlate Moravce 1; Kosice 3 Zilina 0; Ruzomberok 3 Artmedia 0; Dubnica 3 Dunajska Streda 0.
May 16: Zilina 2 Ruzomberok 0; Artmedia 1 Banska Bystrica 1; Tatran 2 Dunajska Streda 1; Nitra 4 Kosice 1; Zlate Moravce 2 Dubnica 0.
May 17: Spartak 1 Slovan 1.
May 20: Nitra 1 Spartak 1.
May 23: Dunajska Streda 1 Zlate Moravce 2; Banska Bystrica 1 Zilina 1; Slovan 1 Tatran 1; Dubnica 0 Artmedia 0; Ruzomberok 1 Nitra 1; Kosice 2 Spartak 1.

SLOVAKIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slovan	31	21	7	3	67	18	70
Zilina	31	17	7	7	51	24	58
Spartak	31	14	10	7	43	33	52
Kosice	31	13	9	9	45	40	48
Artmedia	31	10	11	10	44	38	41
Ruzomberok	31	10	11	10	39	33	41
Tatran	31	9	10	12	37	48	37
Banska B	31	9	8	14	28	35	35
Dunajska S	31	9	8	14	32	56	35
Dubnica	31	9	7	15	37	43	34
Nitra	31	8	8	15	31	48	32
Zlate Moravce	31	5	8	18	20	58	23

SLOVENIA

May 2: Interblock 0 Rudar 1; Koper 1 Primorje 0; Celje 2 Nafta 0; Maribor 2 Domzale 1; Gorica 3 Drava 5.
May 6: Nafta 1 Maribor 0; Rudar 0 Koper 0; Drava 2 Interblock 1; Primorje 2 Celje 0; Domzale 0 Gorica 2.
May 9: Koper 1 Drava 2; Rudar 1 Primorje 1; Gorica 2 Nafta 1; Maribor 1 Celje 0.
May 11: Interblock 0 Domzale 2.
May 16: Nafta 3 Interblock 3; Drava 2 Rudar 0; Domzale 1 Koper 0; Celje 1 Gorica 2.
May 17: Primorje 1 Maribor 1.
May 20: Drava 0 Primorje 1; Rudar 2 Domzale 2; Koper 3 Nafta 0; Interblock 2 Celje 0; Gorica 3 Maribor 0.
May 23: Primorje 2 Gorica 1; Maribor 0 Interblock 1; Celje 1 Koper 2; Nafta 0 Rudar 1; Domzale 2 Drava 2.

SLOVENIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maribor	36	17	12	7	62	44	63
Gorica	36	17	5	14	60	55	56
Rudar	36	16	7	13	44	39	55
Celje	36	15	8	13	48	39	53
Domzale	36	12	14	10	44	40	50
Interblock	36	13	8	15	52	51	47
Nafta	36	11	10	15	36	52	43
Koper	36	10	12	14	39	47	42
Drava	36	12	6	18	47	53	42
Primorje (R)	36	9	14	13	36	48	41

Promoted: Olimpija Ljubljana

SPAIN

Saturday, May 2

Numancia 2 (Moreno 1, Del Pino 63)
Malaga 0 Att: 5,000

Real Madrid 2 (Higuain 14, Sergio Ramos 56)
Barcelona 6 (Henry 18, 58, Puyol 20, Messi 36, 75, Pique 83) Att: 79,500

Villarreal 0
Sevilla 2 (Luis Fabiano 58, Kanoute 85) Att: 17,000

Sunday, May 3

Betis 0
Atletico Madrid 2 (Forlan 14, 89) Att: 35,000

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Nouioui 7)
Valladolid 0 Att: 16,000

Espanyol 3 (Martinez 66, Pareja 82, Nene pen 90)
Valencia 0 Att: 34,130

Mallorca 2 (Jurado 9, Aduriz 69)
Getafe 1 (David Navarro og 46) Att: 15,500

Osasuna 1 (Pandiani 25)
Recreativo 2 (Ersen Martin 81, Morris 90) Att: 18,745

Racing Santander 0
Almeria 2 (Ortiz 3, 13) Att: 21,000

Sporting Gijon 1 (Bilic 61)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Iraola 90) Att: 25,000

Saturday, May 9

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Ion Velez 28)
Betis 0 Att: 32,000

Sevilla 3 (Kanoute pen 32, Luis Fabiano 60, Jesus Navas 76)
Mallorca 1 (Aduriz 16) Att: 40,000

Valencia 3 (Mata 29, Silva 32, Baraja 68)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 50,000

Sunday, May 10

Almeria 3 (Nieto 26, Uche 55, Piatti 90)
Sporting Gijon 1 (Carmelo 16) Att: 11,000

Atletico Madrid 3 (Forlan 53, 90, Aguero 60)
Espanyol 2 (Nene pen 38, Jarque 40) Att: 50,000

SPAIN

Atletico duo go

Atletico Madrid released Portugal midfielder Maniche and Greece defender Giourkas Seitaridis after the pair failed to turn up for a league match for which they were not selected, contrary to club rules.

TURKEY

Bobo strikes twice

Two goals from Brazilian striker Bobo helped Besiktas win the Cup for a third time in four years as they beat Fenerbahce 4-2 in this season's Final. Yusuf Simsek and Filip Holosko were also on target, with Daniel Guiza and Alex replying for Fener.

Cup best...Besiktas

104 league goals scored by Barca with a game to go

UKRAINE

Dynamo leave it late but wrap up title

Olexandr Aliyev's stoppage-time free-kick earned Dynamo Kyiv a dramatic 3-2 victory over Tavriya and secured the league championship ahead of UEFA Cup winners Shakhtar Donetsk.

Match winner...Aliyev

Barcelona 3 (Keita 12, Eto'o 36, Daniel Alves 45)
Villarreal 3 (Llorente 22, 90, Fernandez pen 78)
Att: 95,776

Getafe 3 (Granero pen 25, 48, Uche 52)
Osasuna 0 Att: 15,000

Malaga 1 (Luque 87)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 25,000

Recreativo 1 (Adrian Colunga 43)
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Verdu 17, Pablo Alvarez 49) Att: 17,341

Valladolid 0
Numancia 0 Att: 17,200

Saturday, May 16

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Riki 86)
Getafe 1 (Soldado 46) Att: 14,000

Osasuna 0
Sevilla 0 Att: 18,669

Villarreal 3 (Pires 17, Cani 62, Capdevila 90)
Real Madrid 2 (Van der Vaart 46, Higuain 88) Att: 20,000

Sunday, May 17

Atletico Madrid 1 (Forlan pen 29)
Valencia 0 Att: 53,000

Betis 2 (Gonzalez 6, Arzu 65)
Almeria 0 Att: 30,000

Espanyol 1 (Luis Garcia pen 69)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 32,490

Mallorca 2 (Arango 73, Cleber Santana 78)
Barcelona 1 (Eto'o 10) Att: 20,000

Numancia 1 (Barkero pen 89)
Recreativo 0 Att: 6,558

Racing Santander 3 (Oscar Serrano 4, Jonathan Pereira 60, Zigic 86)
Valladolid 2 (Victor 13, Goitom 20) Att: 16,954

Sporting Gijon 2 (Gerard 24, Helder Rosario og 53)
Malaga 1 (Weligton 38) Att: 25,000

Saturday, May 23

Almeria 0
Espanyol 3 (Ivan Alonso 28, 73, Coro 90) Att: 7,500

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Etxeita 68)
Atletico Madrid 4 (Raul Garcia 59, Forlan 73, 78, pen 87) Att: 36,000

Barcelona 0
Osasuna 1 (Pandiani 26) Att: 77,331

Getafe 1 (Soldado 61)
Numancia 0 Att: 12,000

Malaga 1 (Luque 81)
Betis 1 (Edu 43) Att: 25,000

Recreativo 0
Racing Santander 1 (Zigic 78) Att: 17,000

Sevilla 1 (Perotti 90)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 45,000

Valladolid 1 (Jonathan Sesma 69)
Sporting Gijon 2 (Camacho 44, Bilic 79) Att: 18,812

Villarreal 3 (Llorente 15, 31, Cani 67)
Valencia 1 (Villa 41) Att: 20,000

Sunday, May 24

Real Madrid 1 (Higuain 20)
Mallorca 3 (Arango 26, Cleber Santana 59, Keita 71) Att: 45,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	37	27	5	5	104	34	86
Real Madrid	37	25	3	9	82	50	78
Sevilla	37	20	7	10	52	39	67
At Madrid	37	19	7	11	77	57	64
Villarreal	37	17	11	9	58	52	62
Valencia	37	17	8	12	66	54	59
Dep Coruna	37	16	9	12	47	46	57
Malaga	37	15	10	12	55	56	55
Mallorca	37	14	9	14	51	57	51
Almeria	37	13	7	17	45	58	46
R Santander	37	12	9	16	48	47	45
Espanyol	37	11	11	15	43	49	44
Ath Bilbao	37	12	8	17	47	60	44
Valladolid	37	12	6	19	45	57	42
Getafe	37	10	11	16	49	55	41
Betis	37	10	11	16	50	57	41
Sporting Gijon	37	13	1	23	45	78	40
Osasuna	37	9	13	15	39	46	40
Numancia	37	10	5	22	38	67	35
Recreativo	37	8	9	20	33	55	33

LEADING GOALSCORERS

31 Diego Forlan (Atletico Madrid)
29 Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona)
26 David Villa (Valencia)
23 Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
21 Gonzalo Higuain (Real Madrid)

SPANISH CUP – Final

May 13 - Valencia
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Toquero 9)
Barcelona 4 (Toure 32, Messi 55, Bojan 57, Xavi 64)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo

SWEDEN

Apr 28: IFK 1 Orebro 0.
Apr 29: Halmstads 3 Djurgardens 0; Malmo 0 Gefle 0; GAIS 2 Hammarby 2; AIK 0 Helsingborgs 3.
May 1: Brommapojkarna 1 Elfsborg 1; Trelleborgs 2 Orgryte 1; Kalmar 2 Hacken 1.
May 4: Djurgardens 2 GAIS 1; Gefle 2 Orebro 0; Helsingborgs 1 Malmo 0; Elfsborg 2 IFK 0.
May 5: Hacken 2 Halmstads 2; Trelleborgs 1 AIK 0.
May 6: Hammarby 1 Kalmar 4; Orgryte 1 Brommapojkarna 1.
May 7: IFK 3 Gefle 0.
May 9: AIK 2 Hacken 0.
May 10: Malmo 2 Djurgardens 1; Halmstads 2 Orgryte 1; GAIS 1 Elfsborg 1.
May 11: Kalmar 2 Trelleborgs 0; Brommapojkarna 0 Helsingborgs 3; Orebro 2 Hammarby 0.
May 16: Elfsborg 4 Halmstads 0.
May 17: IFK 2 Kalmar 1; Orebro 2 GAIS 0; Gefle 3 Brommapojkarna 2; Hammarby 1 Malmo 0.
May 18: Orgryte 0 Hacken 1; Helsingborgs 2 Trelleborgs 2; Djurgardens 0 AIK 1.
May 20: Malmo 0 Orebro 0; Brommapojkarna 0 Hammarby 1; Halmstads 0 Gefle 2.
May 21: GAIS 0 IFK 1; Kalmar 1 Orgryte 0; Trelleborgs 3 Djurgardens 0; AIK 0 Elfsborg 0.
May 22: Hacken 3 Helsingborgs 0.
May 23: Hammarby 0 Halmstads 0.
May 24: GAIS 2 Kalmar 2.
May 25: Orebro 2 Brommapojkarna 2; Gefle 1 AIK 0; Helsingborgs 3 Orgryte 1; Elfsborg 1 Trelleborgs 0; IFK 2 Malmo 0.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
IFK	11	8	0	3	20	8	24
Elfsborg	11	6	5	0	15	5	23
Helsingborgs	11	7	1	3	19	12	22
Gefle	11	5	4	2	12	9	19
AIK	11	6	1	4	9	8	19
Orebro	11	5	2	4	11	8	17
Trelleborgs	11	4	4	3	13	9	16
Kalmar	11	4	3	4	15	12	15
Malmo	11	4	3	4	8	7	15
Halmstads	11	4	3	4	12	13	15
Bromm'karna	11	3	4	4	13	14	13
Hacken	10	4	1	5	12	13	13
Hammarby	11	3	3	5	10	14	12
GAIS	11	2	4	5	15	18	10
Djurgardens	10	2	1	7	5	21	7
Orgryte	11	0	1	10	5	23	1

SWITZERLAND

May 2: Basle 2 Sion 2; Lucerne 4 Aarau 0.
May 3: Neuchatel Xamax 0 Zurich 1; Grasshopper 1 Bellinzona 3.
May 5: Young Boys 6 Vaduz 0.
May 9: Aarau 3 Basle 1; Vaduz 2 Neuchatel Xamax 4; Zurich 1 Lucerne 1.
May 10: Bellinzona 2 Young Boys 1; Sion 1 Grasshopper 4.
May 12: Basle 2 Lucerne 0; Vaduz 3 Zurich 5.
May 13: Grasshopper 1 Aarau 1; Neuchatel Xamax 1 Bellinzona 0; Young Boys 2 Sion 1.
May 16: Bellinzona 3 Vaduz 1; Aarau 0 Young Boys 1; Sion 1 Neuchatel Xamax 0.
May 17: Lucerne 1 Grasshopper 1; Zurich 1 Basle 3.
May 24: Bellinzona 0 Zurich 1; Grasshopper 4 Basle 1; Vaduz 1 Sion 5; Neuchatel Xamax 3 Aarau 1; Young Boys 5 Lucerne 2.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zurich	35	23	7	5	78	35	76
Basle	35	22	6	7	72	41	72
Young Boys	35	21	7	7	82	46	70
Grasshopper	35	12	14	9	56	46	50
Bellinzona	35	11	9	15	42	49	42
Aarau	35	10	11	14	33	51	41
Neuchatel X	35	10	10	15	49	55	40
Sion	35	9	9	17	42	58	36
Lucerne	35	8	8	19	43	61	32
Vaduz	35	5	7	23	28	83	22

TURKEY

May 1: Hacettepe 2 Galatasaray 0.
May 2: Trabzonspor 4 Kayserispor 1.
May 3: Konyaspor 2 Kocaelispor 0; Gaziantepspor 2 Sivasspor 1; Denizlispor 3 Eskisehirspor 2; Istanbul BB 3 Genclerbirligi 1; Antalyaspor 2 Bursaspor 3; Ankaragucu 1 Ankaraspor 0; Besiktas 1 Fenerbahce 2.
May 9: Ankarasspor 1 Besiktas 4; Bursaspor 3 Konyaspor 0; Eskisehirspor 2 Antalyaspor 0; Fenerbahce 1 Denizlispor 0; Galatasaray 1 Ankaragucu 0; Genclerbirligi 3 Hacettepe 1; Kocaelispor 1 Trabzonspor 3; Sivasspor 1 Istanbul BB 2.
May 10: Kayserispor 3 Gaziantepspor 0.
May 16: Hacettepe 1 Sivasspor 2.
May 17: Ankaragucu 1 Besiktas 3; Antalyaspor 1 Fenerbahce 1; Istanbul BB 1 Kayserispor 0; Denizlispor 2 Ankaraspor 0; Galatasaray 2 Genclerbirligi 1; Gaziantepspor 5 Kocaelispor 2; Konyaspor 1 Eskisehirspor 2; Trabzonspor 1 Bursaspor 0.
May 23: Kayserispor 1 Hacettepe 0.
May 24: Ankaragucu 3 Denizlispor 0; Ankaraspor 0 Antalyaspor 0; Besiktas 2 Galatasaray 1; Bursaspor 2 Gaziantepspor 2; Eskisehirspor 2 Trabzonspor 5; Fenerbahce 4 Konyaspor 2; Kocaelispor 2 Istanbul BB 3; Sivasspor 3 Genclerbirligi 2.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Besiktas	33	20	8	5	58	29	68
Sivasspor	33	19	9	5	53	26	66
Trabzonspor	33	19	8	6	53	32	65
Fenerbahce	33	17	7	9	58	35	58
Galatasaray	33	17	7	9	55	38	58
Bursaspor	33	15	10	8	46	36	55
Kayserispor	33	12	11	10	34	26	47
Gaziantepspor	33	12	10	11	45	47	46
Istanbul BB	33	12	6	15	37	45	42
Ankaraspor	33	11	8	14	36	39	41
Eskisehirspor	33	10	9	14	44	48	39
Ankaragucu	33	11	6	16	36	46	39
Genclerbirligi	33	10	8	15	38	46	38
Denizlispor	33	11	5	17	38	50	38
Antalyaspor	33	9	10	14	33	42	37
Konyaspor	33	9	8	16	32	46	35
Kocaelispor	33	7	5	21	43	73	26
Hacettepe	33	5	7	21	24	59	22

UKRAINE

May 1: Arsenal 0 Metalist 2.
May 2: Metalurh Donetsk 1 Dnipro 1; Karpaty 0 Tavriya 1; Kharkiv 2 Lviv 3; Chornomorets 3 Illichivets 2.
May 3: Zorya 0 Dynamo 1; Kryvbas 0 Shakhtar 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 1 Vorskla 0.
May 8: Vorskla 1 Arsenal 0; Metalist 1 Metalurh Donetsk 1.
May 9: Lviv 3 Zorya 1; Illichivets 2 Kryvbas 0; Dnipro 4 Chornomorets 1.
May 10: Shakhtar 3 Kharkiv 0; Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Karpaty 0; Dynamo 3 Tavriya 2.
May 15: Kharkiv 1 Illichivets 2; Tavriya 2 Lviv 2.
May 16: Metalurh Donetsk 2 Vorskla 1; Karpaty 1 Dynamo 4; Kryvbas 0 Dnipro 1; Chornomorets 1 Metalist 0; Zorya 0 Shakhtar 3; Arsenal 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0.
May 23: Lviv 0 Dynamo 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 2 Metalurh Donetsk 1; Metalist 1 Kryvbas 0; Vorskla 2 Chornomorets 1; Arsenal 4 Karpaty 0; Shakhtar 2 Tavriya 0; Dnipro 4 Kharkiv 1; Illichivets 1 Zorya 0.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	29	25	1	3	70	19	76
Shakhtar	29	19	7	3	47	15	64
Metalist	29	16	8	5	42	24	56
Dnipro	29	13	9	7	34	23	48
Metalurh D	29	14	6	9	36	27	48
Vorskla	29	13	7	9	30	26	46
Metalurh Z	29	12	9	8	28	28	45
Tavriya	29	9	7	13	38	43	34
Kryvbas	29	8	8	13	21	34	32
Karpaty	29	7	10	12	31	38	31
Arsenal	29	8	7	14	26	33	31
Chornomorets*	29	11	2	16	32	41	29
Zorya	29	7	7	15	27	45	28
Lviv	29	6	8	15	23	37	26
Illichivets	29	7	5	17	29	51	26
Kharkiv	29	2	9	18	18	48	15

**6pts deducted for failing to fulfil contractual obligations to a player*

Underdogs...Defensor (in white)

URUGUAY

Boca shocker

Defensor Sporting's 1-0 win in the first knockout stage away to Boca Juniors was the six-times Libertadores champions first defeat on home soil in the competition since 2003, ending an unbeaten run of 30 matches.

Defensor scored the only goal of the game when Diego De Souza's shot on the turn went in off the bar.

ARGENTINA

Lanus take the lead

Velez Sarsfield's 13-match unbeaten start to the closing championship came to an end with a 3-1 defeat away to Gimnasia La Plata, despite going ahead with a goal from Jonathan Cristaldo.

Velez's reverse enabled Lanus, who came from behind to win 2-1 at Rosario Central the day before, to go top.

73 percentage of points won by Brazilian teams in Libertadores Cup group stage this season

Opener not enough...Cristaldo

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1

Apr 29
Colo Colo (Chl) 0
Palmeiras (Bra) 1 (Cleiton Xavier 87)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 31,038. **Ref:** Torres (Par)
Sent off: Marcao (Palmeiras) 63min

Apr 29
LDU Quito (Ecu) 2 (Espinola 2, Vera 41)
Sport Recife (Bra) 3 (Andrade 23, 77, Igor 58)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Soto (Ven)
Sent off: Salas 33min, D A Calderon 90min (both LDU)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 1 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sport Recife	6	4	1	1	10	7	13
Palmeiras	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Colo Colo	6	2	1	3	9	7	7
LDU Quito	6	1	1	4	6	13	4

Group 2

Apr 30
Boca Juniors (Arg) 3 (Palermo 13, 63, Palacio 80)
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 24,852. **Ref:** Seneme (Bra)

Apr 30
Guarani (Par) 1 (Diaz 55)
Deportivo Cuenca (Ecu) 1 (Teixeira Pereira 2)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Marques (Bra)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 2 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Juniors	6	5	0	1	11	3	15
Dep Cuenca	6	3	1	2	9	4	10
Dep Tachira	6	3	0	3	6	9	9
Guarani	6	0	1	5	5	15	1

Group 3

Apr 30
Nacional (Uru) 3 (Arismendi 29, Coates 80, Lodeiro 90)
Nacional (Par) 1 (Nunez 9)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,042. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)
Sent off: Miranda (Nacional/Par) 62min

Apr 30
River Plate (Arg) 3 (Bou 17, Sambueza 41, Barrado 60)
Universidad SMP (Per) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 2,813. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 3 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional (U)	6	4	2	0	12	3	14
Univ SMP	6	2	2	2	7	9	8
River Plate	6	2	1	3	7	9	7
Nacional (P)	6	1	1	4	7	12	4

Group 4

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 4 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo (Bra)	6	4	1	1	10	6	13
Defensor (Uru)	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Ind M'llin (Col)	6	1	4	1	7	7	7
America (Col)	6	0	3	3	3	7	3

Group 5

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 5 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruzeiro (Bra)	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Estud'tes (Arg)	6	3	1	2	9	4	10
D Quito (Ecu)	6	2	2	2	6	9	8
Univ'tario (Bol)	6	0	2	4	2	8	2

Group 6

Apr 29
Everton (Chl) 1 (Riveros 47)
Guadalajara (Mex) 1 (J Hernandez 8)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Sent off: Miralles (Everton) 87min; Pineda (Guadalajara) 87min

Apr 29
Lanus (Arg) 1 (Macalik 39)
Caracas (Ven) 1 (Figueroa 30)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 793. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 6 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Caracas	6	3	1	2	7	4	10
Guadalajara	6	2	3	1	9	6	9
Everton	6	2	2	2	7	10	8
Lanus	6	0	4	2	5	8	4

Group 7

Apr 28
Aurora (Bol) 1 (Paredes 20)
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 2 (Estrada 14, J Gonzalez 73)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)

Apr 28
Gremio (Bra) 3 (Souza 13, 17, Leo 30)
Chico (Col) 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 34,974. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 7 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gremio	6	5	1	0	11	1	16
Univ de Chile	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Chico	6	3	0	3	8	8	9
Aurora	6	0	0	6	3	15	0

Group 8

Apr 28
Libertad (Par) 0
San Luis (Mex) 2 (Patino 58, Reyes 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,227. **Ref:** De Oliveira (Bra)

Apr 28
San Lorenzo (Arg) 2 (Calheira Seara og 21, Gomez 24)
Universitario (Per) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 2,856. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 8 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad	6	4	0	2	7	5	12
San Luis	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Universitario	6	2	2	2	6	7	8
San Lorenzo	6	2	0	4	6	7	6

Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round

1st knockout round, 1st legs

May 5
Palmeiras 1 (Ortigoza 74)
Sport Recife 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 23,991. **Ref:** Pezzota (Arg)
Sent off: Hamilton (Sport Recife) 73min

May 6
Universidad SMP 1 (Arzuaga 34)
Gremio 3 (Souza 9, Lopez 46, 61)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)

May 7
Deportivo Cuenca 2 (Teixeira Pereira 58, Villalba 69)
Caracas 1 (Cichero 3)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)
Sent off: Castellin (Caracas) 20min

May 7
Estudiantes 3 (G Fernandez 1, Boselli pen 64, 70)
Libertad 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,912. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Sent off: M A Samudio (Libertad) 62min

May 7
Universidad de Chile 1 (Villalobos 85)
Cruzeiro 2 (Soares 8, Marquinhos Parana 52)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Sent off: Olarra (Universidad) 87min

May 14
Defensor Sporting 2 (Gaglianone 45, Mora 84)
Boca Juniors 2 (Palermo 3, Palacio 56)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Torres (Par)

Guadalajara and San Luis both withdrew after their respective 1st knockout round opponents, Sao Paulo and Nacional (Uru), refused to travel to Mexico to play the 1st legs, citing concerns about swine flu. Sao Paulo and Nacional received byes to the quarter-finals

1st knockout round, 2nd legs

May 12
Caracas 4 (Figueroa pen 24, Prieto 42, Rentería 52, Rey 73)
Deportivo Cuenca 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Lunati (Arg)
Caracas 5-2 on agg

May 12
Sport Recife 1 (Wilson 83)
Palmeiras 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 28,487. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Sent off: Wendel (Palmeiras) 90min
Agg 1-1. Palmeiras 3-1 on pens

May 13
Gremio 2 (Jonas 17, Herrera 74)
Universidad SMP 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 23,839. **Ref:** Arias (Par)
Gremio 5-1 on agg

May 14
Cruzeiro 1 (Kleber 74)
Universidad de Chile 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 36,898. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Cruzeiro 3-1 on agg

May 14
Libertad 0
Estudiantes 0
Att: 1,987. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Sent off: Pouso (Libertad) 67min
Estudiantes 3-0 on agg

May 21
Boca Juniors 0
Defensor Sporting 1 (De Souza 27)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Fagundes (Bra)
Defensor 3-2 on agg

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Saturday, May 2
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Canuto 8, Hauche 70)
Colon Santa Fe 0

Gimnasia Jujuy 0
Rosario Central 1 (Gonzalez 43)

Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Maldonado 53)
San Lorenzo 2 (Bordagaray 82, Bergessio 90)

Independiente 4 (Rios 34, Gandin 39, Montenegro 54, 74)
Tigre 1 (Luna 71)

Lanus 0
Estudiantes 3 (Boselli 39, F Fernandez 63, Iberbia 89)

Sunday, May 3
Boca Juniors 2 (Roncaglia 45, Devaca og 58)
Banfield 3 (Silva 29, Fernandez 53, Lopez 90)

Huracan 3 (Goltz 16, Nieto 18, Defederico 55)
Godoy Cruz 2 (Borghello 9, Jimenez 90)

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Formica 82)
River Plate 0

Racing Club 4 (Ramirez 2, Yacob 35, Martinez 45, Castroman 89)
Arsenal 1 (Espinola 13)

San Martin Tucuman 0
Velez Sarsfield 0

Friday, May 8
Banfield 2 (Silva 26, Fernandez 57)
Gimnasia Jujuy 2 (Gomez 2, Busse 11)

Tigre 1 (Luna 28)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Penalba 22)

Saturday, May 9
Arsenal 0
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Colon Santa Fe 2 (Fuertes 65, pen 90)
San Martin Tucuman 0

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Dominguez 77, Zapata 87)
Racing Club 2 (Yacob 44, Ramirez pen 51)

Sunday, May 10
Estudiantes 1 (Cellay 25)
Huracan 1 (Bolatti 71)

Godoy Cruz 2 (Formica 65, Caruso pen 78)
Independiente 0

River Plate 1 (Falcao Garcia 7)
Lanus 1 (Sand 47)

Rosario Central 1 (Zelaya 80)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Formica 21)

San Lorenzo 1 (Bergessio 87)
Boca Juniors 1 (Roncaglia 27)

Friday, May 15
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Hauche 63, Canuto 72)
Godoy Cruz 4 (Caruso 5, 50, Figueroa pen 69, 85)

Lanus 2 (Blanco 47, Lagos 71)
Rosario Central 1 (Lima 19)

BRAZIL

State champions

Corinthians became the first unbeaten Paulista champions for 40 years, when they beat Santos 4-2 on aggregate in the Final.

Elsewhere, Flamengo goalkeeper Bruno saved two spot-kicks – plus one in normal time – as his side beat Botafogo 4-2 on penalties in the Carioca Final after they drew 4-4 on aggregate.

Former national coach Emerson Leao was sacked by Atletico Mineiro after they lost 6-1 on aggregate to arch-rivals Cruzeiro in the Final of the Minas Gerais state championship.

Leao, who was Brazil's goalkeeper at the 1974 and 1978 World Cup finals, was sent off in the second leg for running onto the pitch to argue with the referee.

Triumph...Corinthians

CHILE

Colo Colo crash out

Union Espanola clinched victory in the regular phase of the opening championship and will now contest the title play-offs with the other top-eight teams.

Reigning champions Colo Colo said goodbye to their chances of retaining their crown after crashing to a 1-0 defeat against Palestino.

On top...Caracas

Saturday, May 16
Gimnasia La Plata 3 (Messera 19, Romero 42, Cuevas 51)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Cristaldo 18)

Huracan 4 (Pastore 40, 76, Medina 64, Toranzo 87)
River Plate 0

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Da Silva 77)
Banfield 1 (Fernandez 21)

Tigre 2 (Luna 27, pen 84)
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Fuertes 90)

Sunday, May 17
Boca Juniors 2 (Figueroa 24, Chavez 41)
Arsenal 1 (Matos 7)

Gimnasia Jujuy 0
San Lorenzo 3 (Bergessio 56, Fornaroli 65, 70)

Independiente 1 (Montenegro 81)
Estudiantes 5 (Salgueiro 16, F Fernandez 41, Galvan 46, Nunez 51, Valencia 89)

Racing Club 1 (Caceres 34)
San Martin Tucuman 2 (Turdo 30, Urbano 59)

Friday, May 22
Arsenal 0
Gimnasia Jujuy 1 (Silva 68)

Godoy Cruz 0
Tigre 2 (Ayala 32, Luna 89)

Saturday, May 23
Banfield 0
Lanus 1 (Velazquez 28)

Estudiantes 3 (Perez 33, 45, 62)
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Hauche 46, Pavlovich 49)

Rosario Central 1 (Moreno y Fabianesi pen 78)
Huracan 2 (Pastore 8, 66)

San Lorenzo 0
Newell's Old Boys 2 (Sperdutti 48, Da Silva 62)

Sunday, May 24
Colon Santa Fe 0
Racing Club 0

River Plate 2 (Barrado 29, Falcao Garcia 37)
Independiente 0

San Martin Tucuman 0
Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Gonzalez 38)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Lopez 62, Cristaldo 63)
Boca Juniors 0

ARGENTINA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lanus	15	10	1	4	25	18	31
Velez	15	8	6	1	24	12	30
Huracan	15	9	2	4	29	17	29
Colon	15	7	4	4	20	14	25
Estudiantes	15	6	5	4	18	12	23
River Plate	15	6	5	4	20	21	23
Gimnasia LP	15	5	6	4	19	18	21
Newell's	15	4	8	3	19	16	20
Godoy Cruz	15	5	5	5	20	22	20
Racing Club	15	5	5	5	16	20	20
Rosario	15	5	4	6	19	16	19
Banfield	15	5	4	6	18	19	19
San Lorenzo	15	5	3	7	22	23	18
San Martin T	15	4	5	6	17	16	17
Tigre	15	4	5	6	18	21	17
Independiente	15	5	2	8	18	28	17
Boca Juniors	15	4	4	7	15	19	16
Gimnasia J	15	3	5	7	14	19	14
Argentinos Jrs	15	2	7	6	17	26	13
Arsenal	15	3	4	8	13	24	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
9 Rodrigo Lopez (Velez Sarsfield)
9 Carlos Luna (Tigre)
9 Daniel Montenegro (Independiente)
9 Jose Sand (Lanus)

BOLIVIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 2: Real Potosi 4 Jorge Wilstermann 0.
May 3: San Jose 6 Oriente 1; Bolivar 2 The Strongest 2; Real Mamore 1 La Paz 3; Aurora 0 Nacional 3; Blooming 2 Universitario 1.
May 10: La Paz 2 Aurora 3; Real Potosi 0 Oriente 0; San Jose 2 Bolivar 2; The Strongest 2 Universitario 1; Real Mamore 2 Jorge Wilstermann 1; Blooming 2 Nacional 0.
May 13: San Jose 5 Real Potosi 3; Nacional 3 The Strongest 0; La Paz 2 Blooming 0; Universitario 2 Bolivar 1.
May 14: Jorge Wilstermann 0 Aurora 2; Oriente 1 Real Mamore 0.
May 17: Real Potosi 2 Bolivar 2; The Strongest 2 La Paz 1; Universitario 3 Nacional 1; Real Mamore 2 San Jose 3; Aurora 0 Oriente 0; Blooming 1 Jorge Wilstermann 1.
May 23: Bolivar 4 Nacional 2.
May 24: Jorge Wilstermann 1 The Strongest 2; La Paz 2 Universitario 1; San Jose 3 Aurora 0; Real Potosi 4 Real Mamore 0; Oriente 2 Blooming 0.

BOLIVIA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
La Paz	15	8	3	4	27	23	27
San Jose	15	8	1	6	38	26	25
Real Potosi	15	7	4	4	31	25	25
Universitario	15	7	3	5	27	21	24
Nacional	15	7	3	5	25	22	24
The Strongest	15	7	2	6	26	23	23
Aurora	15	6	4	5	24	20	22
Oriente	15	6	4	5	17	20	22
Bolivar	15	5	6	4	25	20	21
Blooming	15	5	4	6	19	21	19
Real Mamore	15	2	3	10	11	33	9
J Wilstermann	15	1	5	9	13	29	8

BRAZIL

May 9: Palmeiras 2 Coritiba 1; Sport Recife 1 Barueri 1; Avai 2 Atletico Mineiro 2.
May 10: Santo Andre 1 Botafogo 1; Gremio 1 Santos 1; Corinthians 0 Internacional 1; Fluminense 1 Sao Paulo 0; Cruzeiro 2 Flamengo 0; Goias 3 Nautico 3; Atletico Paranaense 0 Vitoria 2.
May 16: Coritiba 2 Santo Andre 4; Flamengo 0 Avai 0; Atletico Mineiro 2 Gremio 1.
May 17: Botafogo 0 Corinthians 0; Internacional 2 Palmeiras 0; Sao Paulo 2 Atletico Paranaense 2; Santos 3 Goias 3; Vitoria 1 Sport Recife 0; Nautico 2 Cruzeiro 0; Barueri 0 Fluminense 0.
May 23: Goias 0 Internacional 1; Cruzeiro 2 Vitoria 0; Corinthians 2 Barueri 1.
May 24: Palmeiras 0 Sao Paulo 0; Sport Recife 2 Atletico Mineiro 3; Fluminense 1 Santos 4; Atletico Paranaense 2 Nautico 3; Santo Andre 1 Flamengo 2; Gremio 2 Botafogo 0; Avai 2 Coritiba 2.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Internacional	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
Nautico	3	2	1	0	8	5	7
At Mineiro	3	2	1	0	7	5	7
Cruzeiro	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Vitoria	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Santos	3	1	2	0	8	5	5
Santo Andre	3	1	1	1	6	5	4
Gremio	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Corinthians	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Flamengo	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Palmeiras	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Fluminense	3	1	1	1	2	4	4
Avai	3	0	3	0	4	4	3
Goias	3	0	2	1	6	7	2
Barueri	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Sao Paulo	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Botafogo	3	0	2	1	1	3	2
Sport Recife	3	0	1	2	3	5	1
Coritiba	3	0	1	2	5	8	1
At Paranaense	3	0	1	2	4	7	1

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP
League stage

May 2: Cobreloa 2 Colo Colo 0; Cobresal 2 Municipal 5; Huachipato 3 Nublense 1; Everton 1 Palestino 1; Univ de Chile 3 Dep La Serena 2.
May 3: Rangers 0 Audax Italiano 1; Santiago Morning 0 Univ Catolica 1; O'Higgins 5 Curico Unido 3; Union Espanola 2 Univ de Concepcion 1.
May 6: Everton 1 Cobresal 1.
May 9: Santiago Morning 2 Rangers 1; Huachipato 4 Palestino 1; Colo Colo 5 Cobresal 2; Dep La Serena 1 O'Higgins 2; Audax Italiano 0 Everton 1.
May 10: Curico Unido 1 Union Espanola 3; Nublense 2 Univ de Concepcion 3; Cobreloa 0 Municipal 2; Univ Catolica 0 Univ de Chile 1.
May 13: Colo Colo 1 Everton 1.
May 15: Univ de Concepcion 0 Univ Catolica 2.
May 16: Palestino 1 Colo Colo 0; Cobresal 1 Audax Italiano 0; O'Higgins 3 Santiago Morning 2; Union Espanola 1 Nublense 2; Municipal 2 Dep La Serena 0.
May 17: Univ de Chile 1 Huachipato 3; Rangers 4 Cobreloa 1; Everton 3 Curico Unido 2.
May 21: Cobresal 3 Univ de Chile 2.

CHILE – OPENING – LEAGUE STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Espanola	17	12	2	3	38	17	38
Univ de Chile	17	9	4	4	33	21	31
Everton	17	7	7	3	24	17	28
S Morning	17	8	3	6	41	29	27
Univ Catolica	17	8	3	6	26	18	27
Municipal	17	7	5	5	27	23	26
Audax Italiano	17	7	4	6	25	20	25
O'Higgins	17	7	4	6	25	26	25
Huachipato	17	7	4	6	26	29	25
Cobreloa	17	7	3	7	24	25	24
U Concepcion	17	6	5	6	24	25	23
Nublense	17	5	5	7	18	26	20
Colo Colo	17	5	4	8	28	28	19
Curico Unido	17	5	4	8	24	28	19
Cobresal	17	4	7	6	23	34	19
Palestino	17	5	2	10	18	37	17
Rangers	17	3	5	9	20	28	14
Dep La Serena	17	3	5	9	19	32	14

Top eight qualified for play-offs

COLOMBIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP
Regular season

Apr 29: Dep Pasto 1 Dep Cali 0; Once Caldas 3 Real Cartagena 0; Cucuta 2 Indep Santa Fe 1; Millonarios 0 Envigado 1; Tolima 1 Indep Medellin 0; Quindio 0 Pereira 2; At Junior 1 La Equidad 1; America 2 At Huila 3.
May 2: Indep Santa Fe 1 At Nacional 1; America 3 At Junior 0; Indep Medellin 1 Millonarios 1.
May 3: La Equidad 2 Quindio 1; Pereira 2 Tolima 0; Envigado 1 Cucuta 0; Chico 1 Once Caldas 0; Real Cartagena 2 Dep Pasto 1; At Huila 1 Dep Cali 0.
May 9: At Junior 4 At Huila 0; Millonarios 2 Pereira 3; Tolima 1 La Equidad 0; Dep Cali 2 Real Cartagena 1; Dep Pasto 0 Chico 1; Once Caldas 3 Indep Santa Fe 0; At Nacional 1 Envigado 1; Quindio 2 America 0.
May 10: Cucuta 1 Indep Medellin 0.
May 13: La Equidad 1 Millonarios 1; Indep Medellin 1 At Nacional 2; America 3 Tolima 1; Pereira 0 Cucuta 1; Envigado 1 Once Caldas 1; Indep Santa Fe 1 Dep Pasto 0; Chico 1 Dep Cali 1; At Huila 3 Real Cartagena 1; At Junior 4 Quindio 1.
May 16: Tolima 1 At Junior 0.
May 17: Quindio 0 At Huila 2; Millonarios 3 America 1; Cucuta 0 La Equidad 0; At Nacional 1 Pereira 1; Dep Pasto 3 Envigado 0; Once Caldas 1 Indep Medellin 0; Dep Cali 2 Indep Santa Fe 2; Real Cartagena 6 Chico 3.

COLOMBIA – OPENING – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	18	10	2	6	21	16	32
At Junior	18	9	4	5	30	18	31
Cucuta	18	9	4	5	16	14	31
Chico	18	8	6	4	24	22	30
Dep Cali	18	8	5	5	23	17	29
La Equidad	18	8	5	5	20	18	29
Envigado	18	8	5	5	22	24	29
Once Caldas	18	7	7	4	23	14	28
Quindio	18	7	4	7	23	22	25
Cartagena	18	7	4	7	23	24	25
America	18	7	3	8	24	21	24
Pereira	18	7	3	8	26	25	24
At Huila	18	7	3	8	20	26	24
Ind Santa Fe	18	5	6	7	20	25	21
Millonarios	18	3	8	7	16	20	17
Dep Pasto	18	4	5	9	12	17	17
At Nacional	18	3	7	8	16	25	16
Ind Medellin	18	2	5	11	18	29	11

Top eight qualified for play-offs

VENEZUELA

Caracas are champs

Caracas won the closing title after they beat Zamora 3-1 and Deportivo Tachira could only draw 3-3 with Estudiantes.

Caracas face Deportivo Italia for the national title.

MEXICO

So close for Indios

Indios from the border city of Ciudad Juarez – which is at the centre of the country's drugs war and is one of Mexico's most violent cities – missed out on a place in the closing championship Final despite winning 3-2 at Pachuca.

Pachuca, who were leading 2-0 from the first leg, went ahead in the 13th minute of the return when Jose Maria Cardenas fired home a loose ball. However, Indios – who were promoted last year and are playing in the top flight for the first time – came within a whisker of pulling off a sensational fightback as Edwin Santibanez, Juan Pablo Rodriguez and Ezequiel Maggiolo scored to put Indios 3-1 ahead and level the aggregate scores.

But Pachuca snatched a place in the Final against Pumas UNAM with Blas Perez's last-minute goal.

Cruz Azul sacked coach Benjamin Galindo following a disastrous end-of-season run in which they won only two out of their last 17 league games. Robert Siboldi was named as their new manager.

1,600 deaths in Ciudad Juarez last year

Pachuca's saviour...Perez

Play-offs

Group A

May 24: Once Caldas 2 Chico 1; Tolima 0 La Equidad 0.

COLOMBIA – OPENING – PLAY-OFFS – GP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Caldas	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
La Equidad	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Tolima	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Chico	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

Group B

May 23: At Junior 2 Dep Cali 2; Cucuta 1 Envigado 1.

COLOMBIA – OPENING – PLAY-OFFS – GP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Junior	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Dep Cali	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Cucuta	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Envigado	1	0	1	0	1	1	1

ECUADOR

1st stage

May 1: El Nacional 0 Dep Quito 1.
May 2: LDU Portoviejo 2 Espoli 1.
May 3: LDU Quito 3 Barcelona 0; Tecnico Univ 1 Olmedo 1; Emelec 1 Macara 0.
May 9: Olmedo 3 Dep Cuenca 2; Manta 1 El Nacional 0; Espoli 1 Emelec 2.
May 10: Macara 2 LDU Quito 1; Dep Quito 2 LDU Portoviejo 0; Barcelona 4 Tecnico Univ 1.
May 16: Macara 3 Espoli 2; LDU Quito 4 Tecnico Univ 0; LDU Portoviejo 0 Manta 1
May 17: El Nacional 3 Olmedo 0; Dep Cuenca 1 Barcelona 0; Emelec 2 Dep Quito 0.
May 20: Dep Quito 2 Dep Cuenca 0.
May 23: Barcelona 0 El Nacional 0; Espoli 2 LDU Quito 2; Manta 0 Emelec 1; Dep Quito 0 Macara 2; Tecnico Univ 2 Dep Cuenca 1.
May 24: Olmedo 2 LDU Portoviejo 1.

ECUADOR – 1ST STAGE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Emelec	16	9	3	4	22	13	30
LDU Quito	16	8	4	4	31	16	28
El Nacional	16	7	4	5	17	11	25
Espoli	16	7	3	6	24	22	24
Macara	16	7	2	7	18	20	23
Dep Quito	16	7	2	7	13	15	23
Olmedo	16	6	4	6	17	17	22
Barcelona	16	5	5	6	16	16	20
LDU P'viejo	16	6	2	8	13	23	20
Manta	15	5	4	6	11	13	19
Dep Cuenca	15	6	0	9	19	22	18
Tecnico Univ	16	4	3	9	19	32	15

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 2: Tacuary 1 12 de Octubre 0; 3 de Febrero 0 Libertad 1; 2 de Mayo 2 Olimpia 3.
May 3: Rubio Nu 0 Sportivo Luqueno 2; Sol de America 0 Guarani 0; Cerro Porteno 1 Nacional 1.
May 6: 2 de Mayo 1 Guarani 1.
May 9: Sportivo Luqueno 0 Cerro Porteno 1; Guarani 2 Rubio Nu 0; Nacional 4 Tacuary 0.
May 10: 12 de Octubre 1 3 de Febrero 0; 2 de Mayo 1 Sol de America 0; Olimpia 2 Libertad 1.
May 12: Cerro Porteno 1 Guarani 0.
May 13: Rubio Nu 4 2 de Mayo 2; Tacuary 3 Sportivo Luqueno 2; 3 de Febrero 2 Nacional 1; Sol de America 1 Olimpia 0.
May 16: 2 de Mayo 0 Cerro Porteno 0.
May 17: Sportivo Luqueno 4 3 de Febrero 0; Sol de America 3 Rubio Nu 2; Olimpia 1 12 de Octubre 0; Nacional 1 Libertad 3; Guarani 1 Tacuary 0.
May 20: Libertad 4 12 de Octubre 1.
May 23: Rubio Nu 3 Olimpia 5.
May 24: 3 de Febrero 2 Guarani 1; Cerro Porteno 1 Sol de America 0; 12 de Octubre 1 Nacional 1; Tacuary 1 2 de Mayo 0; Libertad 4 Sportivo Luqueno 1.

PARAGUAY – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro Porteno	16	10	4	2	19	6	34
Libertad	16	10	3	3	40	14	33
Olimpia	16	8	6	2	25	16	30
Nacional	16	6	7	3	26	18	25
Tacuary	16	7	4	5	19	22	25
S Luqueno	16	6	6	4	20	16	24
Rubio Nu	16	6	1	9	23	27	19
Guarani	16	4	6	6	11	13	18
Sol America	16	4	6	6	14	20	18
12 de Octubre	16	4	5	7	11	18	17
2 de Mayo	16	2	5	9	17	28	11
3 de Febrero	16	2	1	13	15	42	7

PERU

Regular season

May 2: Cesar Vallejo 3 Coronel Bolognesi 0; Melgar 0 Universitario 0.
May 3: Cienciano 3 Alianza Atletico 0; Huancayo 2 Juan Aurich 0; Sport Ancash 1 Colegio Nacional 0; Universidad SMP 1 Inti Gas 2; Jose Galvez 2 Sporting Cristal 1; Alianza Lima 2 Total Chalaco 2.
May 9: Total Chalaco 4 Universidad SMP 2; Inti Gas 1 Sport Ancash 1; Coronel Bolognesi 1 Jose Galvez 0; Sporting Cristal 1 Melgar 2; Universitario 4 Huancayo 1; Juan Aurich 3 Cesar Vallejo 0.
May 10: Alianza Atletico 1 Alianza Lima 0; Colegio Nacional 1 Cienciano 3.
May 13: Inti Gas 2 Al Atletico 0; Huancayo 1 Jose Galvez 0; Total Chalaco 2 Colegio 1; Al Lima 1 Sport Ancash 0; Cesar Vallejo 5 Melgar 1; Juan Aurich 2 S Cristal 1; C Bolognesi 0 Universitario 0.
May 16: Melgar 2 Coronel Bolognesi 1; Alianza Lima 4 Colegio Nacional 0.
May 17: Cienciano 3 Inti Gas 0; Sport Ancash 0 Total Chalaco 2; Huancayo 0 Sporting Cristal 2; Universidad SMP 3 Alianza Atletico 2; Jose Galvez 1 Juan Aurich 1; Cesar Vallejo 3 Universitario 1.
May 23: Inti Gas 3 Alianza Lima 0; Alianza Atletico 2 Sport Ancash 0; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Huancayo 0; Sporting Cristal 1 Cesar Vallejo 0.
May 24: Total Chalaco 4 Cienciano 0; Colegio Nacional 0 Universidad SMP 2; Juan Aurich 2 Melgar 2; Universitario 1 Jose Galvez 1.

PERU – REGULAR SEASON	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juan Aurich	15	7	7	1	19	11	28
Al Lima	15	8	3	4	20	15	27
Total Chalaco	15	7	4	4	25	15	25
Universitario	14	7	4	3	21	11	25
Cesar Vallejo	15	7	3	5	20	15	24
Jose Galvez	15	7	3	5	15	16	24
Huancayo	15	7	2	6	17	15	23
Melgar	15	6	4	5	18	21	22
Univ SMP*	13	6	4	3	24	18	21
Cienciano	14	5	6	3	17	14	21
S Cristal	15	6	2	7	30	18	20
Inti Gas	15	5	5	5	15	13	20
Colegio	15	3	3	9	10	21	12
Al Atletico	15	3	3	9	14	27	12
Sport Ancash	15	2	4	9	8	25	10
C Bolognesi	15	1	5	9	9	27	8

**1pt deducted*

URUGUAY

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 2: Defensor 1 Danubio 0.
May 3: Racing 0 Cerro 4; Wanderers 0 Liverpool 1; Juventud 0 River Plate 3; Tacuarembo 1 Central Espanol 1; Cerro Largo 4 Bella Vista 1; Rampla Juniors 1 Nacional 3.
May 9: Tacuarembo 2 Rampla Juniors 2; Bella Vista 0 Central Espanol 2; Juventud 0 Wanderers 2; Nacional 2 Danubio 0.
May 10: River Plate 2 Cerro 1; Defensor 2 Racing 1; Liverpool 2 Penarol 1.
May 16: Cerro Largo 3 Juventud 1; Danubio 1 Bella Vista 0; Penarol 0 River Plate 2.
May 17: Central Espanol 1 Liverpool 5; Racing 1 Tacuarembo 1; Wanderers 2 Defensor 4; Cerro 2 Nacional 2.
May 23: Danubio 2 Liverpool 3; Bella Vista 2 River Plate 3; Juventud 0 Racing 2; Tacuarembo 1 Cerro Largo 1; Central Espanol 0 Cerro 2.
May 24: Rampla Juniors 1 Defensor 4; Nacional 3 Penarol 2.

URUGUAY – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Defensor	12	10	1	1	25	11	31
River Plate	12	8	3	1	30	16	27
Cerro	12	8	1	3	26	12	25
Nacional	12	6	5	1	26	16	23
Racing	13	6	4	3	20	15	22
Liverpool	12	6	3	3	18	13	21
Penarol	12	6	1	5	18	13	19
Cerro Largo	12	5	3	4	19	18	18
Wanderers	12	5	2	5	22	22	17
Danubio	12	4	2	6	18	20	14
Bella Vista	12	2	3	7	13	22	9
Tacuarembo	13	1	6	6	13	23	9
C Espanol	12	2	2	8	12	23	8
Juventud	12	1	2	9	10	31	5
Rampla Jrs	12	0	4	8	15	30	4

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

May 2: Estrella Roja 1 Estudiantes 2.
May 3: Carabobo 1 Llaneros 1; Monagas 1 Caracas 1; UA Maracaibo 0 Mineros 1; Minerven 2 Portuguesa 1; Dep Italia 1 Aragua 1; Zamora 0 Anzoategui 0; Dep Tachira 2 Guaros 0.
May 10: Caracas 2 El Vigia 1; Aragua 2 UA Maracaibo 2; Portuguesa 1 Dep Italia 0; Zulia 0 Zamora 1; Guaros 2 Minerven 1; Llaneros 2 Dep Tachira 3; Estudiantes 2 Carabobo 1; Anzoategui 5 Estrella Roja 1; Mineros 1 Monagas 0.
May 13: El Vigia 1 Zulia 3.
May 16: Dep Italia 1 Guaros 2.
May 17: Carabobo 2 Anzoategui 1; Dep Tachira 3 Estudiantes 3; Minerven 0 Llaneros 3; Estrella Roja 2 Zulia 0; UA Maracaibo 1 Portuguesa 2; Monagas 0 Aragua 0; El Vigia 0 Mineros 1; Zamora 1 Caracas 3.

VENEZUELA – CLOSING – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Caracas	17	11	4	2	32	15	37
Dep Tachira	17	10	6	1	29	15	36
Estudiantes	17	10	3	4	27	19	33
Zamora	17	8	7	2	29	19	31
Guaros	17	9	3	5	19	18	30
Llaneros	17	7	6	4	22	17	27
Mineros	17	7	3	7	18	19	24
Zulia	17	6	5	6	24	22	23
Dep Italia	17	4	8	5	22	19	20
Portuguesa	17	5	5	7	18	21	20
Monagas	17	4	7	6	19	21	19
Anzoategui	17	4	6	7	21	20	18
Minerven	17	4	6	7	17	27	18
Estrella Roja	17	4	5	8	17	26	17
El Vigia	17	3	6	8	18	25	15
UA Maracaibo	17	4	3	10	18	26	15
Aragua	17	2	8	7	15	22	14
Carabobo	17	3	5	9	17	31	14

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final, 2nd leg

May 12 - Cancun
Atlante (Mex) 0
Cruz Azul (Mex) 0
Att: 13,000. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
Atlante 2-0 on agg
Atlante: Vilar - Venegas, Espinoza, Navarro (Castillo 68), Marquez Lugo (Maldonado 68), Pereyra, Rey (Munoz 75), Guerrero, Bermudez, Ovalle, Velazquez.
Cruz Azul: Blanco - Dominguez, Torrado, Riveros (Villaluz 56), Bonet (Gonzalez 72), Zeballos (Martini 62), Castro, Beltran, Vela, Lozano, Orozco.

MEXICO

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP
League stage

May 1: Tecos UAG 2 Pumas UNAM 0.
May 2: Monterrey 2 America 3; Cruz Azul 0 Indios 1; Morelia 4 Atlas 2; Guadalajara 0 Puebla 0; Pachuca 5 Jaguares 1; Necaxa 1 Atlante 1.
May 3: Toluca 4 Tigres 1; Santos 3 San Luis 1.
May 9: San Luis 1 Toluca 5; Jaguares 3 Cruz Azul 3; Atlas 0 Pachuca 5; Tigres 1 Morelia 1; Atlante 2 Santos 1; America 1 Necaxa 0.
May 10: Pumas UNAM 3 Monterrey 0; Puebla 1 Tecos UAG 1; Indios 3 Guadalajara 1.

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 1 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pachuca	17	11	3	3	42	23	36
Monterrey	17	7	5	5	28	22	26
Puebla	17	7	5	5	21	24	26
Indios	17	5	8	4	21	22	23
Santos	17	5	7	5	25	20	22
Atlante	17	3	8	6	18	21	17

GROUP 2 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pumas UNAM	17	8	4	5	23	17	28
Tecos UAG	17	6	7	4	21	17	25
America	17	6	5	6	25	27	23
Morelia	17	5	7	5	19	20	22
Guadalajara	17	5	6	6	21	20	21
Cruz Azul	17	2	7	8	26	33	13

GROUP 3 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca	17	10	6	1	34	19	36
Jaguares	17	5	6	6	22	24	21
Atlas	17	5	6	6	22	29	21
San Luis	17	4	5	8	21	27	17
Tigres	17	2	8	7	15	26	14
Necaxa	17	3	5	9	17	30	14

Top two in each group plus the two other teams with the best record went into quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

1st legs - May 13/14; 2nd legs - May 16/17
Indios v Toluca 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0); Jaguares v Pachuca 1-3, 0-2 (agg 1-5); Puebla v Monterrey 3-1, 2-2 (agg 5-3); Tecos UAG v Pumas UNAM 2-0, 0-3 (agg 2-3).

Semi-finals

1st legs - May 20/21; 2nd legs - May 23/24
Indios v Pachuca 0-2, 3-2 (agg 3-4); Puebla v Pumas UNAM 1-2, 2-1 (agg 3-3; Pumas on better league stage record).

USA

Barca on tour

Barcelona will play three pre-season games against MLS opposition. They face Los Angeles Galaxy on August 1, Seattle Sounders on August 5 and a third side, also expected to be a west-coast club, who will be named at a later date.

Philadelphia Union will become the 16th club in MLS next season.

Union rights...Philly fans

ALGERIA

Cup goes to penalties

CR Belouizdad won the domestic Cup for the sixth time by beating CA Bordj Bou Arreridj 2-1 on penalties in the Final.

EGYPT

Jose's fitting send off

A Flavio Amado goal gave Al Ahly a 1-0 victory over Ismaili in the championship play-off. It was the fifth consecutive title for the Cairo club and a fitting farewell to Portuguese coach Manuel Jose, who now takes charge of Angola.

SOUTH AFRICA

Swallows Cup success

Vinicius Da Silva's goal gave Moroka Swallows a 1-0 win over Pretoria University in the Cup Final.

Finale...Ahly's (in red) v Ismaili

UNITED STATES

May 2: Toronto 1 Columbus 1; DC United 2 Dallas 1; Chicago 1 Seattle 1; Colorado 2 Salt Lake 0; San Jose 0 Chivas 1; Los Angeles 1 New York 0.
May 3: New England 0 Houston 2.
May 6: Kansas City 1 DC United 1; Salt Lake 2 LA 2.
May 8: New York 4 San Jose 1.
May 9: Columbus 3 Kansas City 2; DC United 3 Toronto 3; Chicago 1 New England 1; Houston 1 Dallas 0; Chivas 1 Salt Lake 0.
May 10: Seattle 1 Los Angeles 1.
May 16: Toronto 0 Chicago 2; New England 1 Colorado 1; New York 1 Houston 1; Dallas 1 Seattle 1; Salt Lake 0 Kansas City 2; Chivas 2 DC United 2.
May 17: Los Angeles 1 Columbus 1.
May 23: Toronto 3 New England 1; DC United 0 Salt Lake 0; Kansas City 1 Chivas 1; Dallas 1 Los Angeles 1; Houston 3 San Jose 1; Colorado 2 Seattle 2.
May 24: New York 0 Chicago 1.

UNITED STATES – EASTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chicago	10	4	6	0	17	11	18
DC United	11	3	7	1	17	15	16
Toronto	11	4	4	3	16	16	16
Kansas City	11	4	3	4	15	13	15
New England	9	2	4	3	8	16	10
Columbus	9	1	6	2	12	15	9
New York	11	2	3	6	10	13	9

WESTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chivas	11	7	3	1	15	6	24
Seattle	10	4	4	2	14	8	16
Houston	9	4	3	2	11	7	15
Colorado	9	3	4	2	13	11	13
Salt Lake	10	3	2	5	14	13	11
Los Angeles	10	1	8	1	12	12	11
Dallas	10	1	3	6	9	17	6
San Jose	9	1	2	6	9	19	5

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

2nd round

1st legs - Apr 17-19; 2nd legs - May 2/3

Al Ahly Tripoli (Lby) v Etoile Sahel (Tun) 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2); ASEC Abidjan (IvC) v Monomotapa (Zim) 1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2); Djoliba (Mli) v Zesco United (Zam) 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2); Heartland (Nig) v Cotonsport (Cam) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2); Kampala City Council (Uga) v Al Merreikh (Sud) 0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2); Kano Pillars (Nig) v Al Ahly (Egy) 1-1, 2-2 (agg 3-3; Kano Pillars on away goals); Primeiro Agosto (Ang) v Al Hilal (Sud) 3-1, 0-2 (agg 3-3; Al Hilal on away goals); TP Mazembe (DRC) v IZ Khemisset (Mor) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0).

Losers enter Confederation Cup

CONFEDERATION CUP

2nd round

1st legs - April 17-19; 2nd legs - May 2/3

Aigle Royal (Cam) v Bayelsa United (Nig) 1-0, 0-5 (agg 1-5); CS Sfaxien (Tun) v Jeunesse Club (IvC) 2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0); ENPPI (Egy) v Red Arrows (Zam) 4-0, 0-3 (agg 4-3); ES Setif (Alg) v Recreativo (Ang) 4-0, 1-5 (agg 5-5; ES Setif on away goals); Haras Hedood (Egy) v EGS Gafsa (Tun) 3-0, 3-1 (agg 6-1); JSM Bejaia (Alg) v Stade Malien (Mli) 1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1; Stade Malien 13-12 on pens); Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) v AS Vita Club (DRC) 2-2, 0-1 (agg 2-3); Union Douala (Cam) v Santos (Ang) 1-1, 0-4 (agg 1-5).

EGYPT

Apr 28: Al Masry 0 Al Jaish 1; Ismaili 3 Zamalek 1; Al Mokawloon 3 Tersana 1.
May 7: ENPPI 1 Olympic 0; Haras Hedood 1 Al Jaish 1; Tersana 2 Al Ahly 3.
May 10: Al Ittihad 0 Al Shorta 0.
May 11: Itesalata 0 Ismaili 1; Al Jaish 2 Olympic 1; ENPPI 2 Al Mokawloon 2; Al Masry 1 Ghazl Al Mehalla 0; Zamalek 0 Assyut 0; Tersana 1 Petrojet 1; Haras Hedood 0 Al Ahly 1.
May 20: Ismaili 3 Tersana 0; Al Ahly 3 Al Jaish 1; Al Shorta 0 Zamalek 2.
May 21: Ghazl Al Mehalla 2 Al Ittihad 0; Olympic 1 Al Masry 1; Assyut 0 Itesalata 2; Al Mokawloon 2 Haras Hedood 1; Petrojet 3 ENPPI 2.

EGYPT – FINAL*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly*	30	18	9	3	52	25	63
Ismaili*	30	20	3	7	52	31	63
Petrojet	30	13	12	5	47	38	51
Haras Hedood	30	14	8	8	34	22	50
ENPPI	30	13	10	7	49	39	49
Zamalek	30	11	9	10	34	29	42
Al Jaish	30	10	8	12	40	51	38
Al Masry	30	9	10	11	36	34	37
Al Shorta	30	9	10	11	28	29	37
Al Mokawloon	30	8	13	9	36	37	37
Al Ittihad	30	10	7	13	29	35	37
G Al Mehalla	30	8	9	13	20	26	33
Assyut	30	9	6	15	25	39	33
Itesalata (R)	30	7	11	12	43	46	32
Tersana (R)	30	5	9	16	29	45	24
Olympic (R)	30	6	6	18	30	58	24

**Al Ahly and Ismaili went into championship play-off after finishing level on points*

Championship play-off

May 24: Al Ahly 1 Ismaili 0.

SOUTH AFRICA

Apr 29: Ajax 1 Platinum 1.
May 2: Orlando 2 Kaizer 1; Maritzburg 3 Moroka 1; Bidvest 5 Bay 0.
May 3: Bloemfontein 2 Platinum 0; AmaZulu 0 Free State 1; Golden Arrows 3 Santos 1.
May 6: Bloemfontein 3 Bay 0; Thanda 2 Platinum 1; Kaizer 0 Santos 3; SuperSport 1 Golden Arrows 2; AmaZulu 0 Bidvest 0; Ajax 1 Orlando 1; Moroka 0 Mamelodi 0; Maritzburg 1 Free State 1.
May 9: Mamelodi 0 Ajax 2; Free State 5 Bloemfontein 1; Orlando 3 AmaZulu 1; Thanda 0 Maritzburg 0; Santos 0 SuperSport 0; Platinum 0 Kaizer 2; Bidvest 2 Moroka 0; Bay 0 Golden Arrows 1.

SOUTH AFRICA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SuperSport	30	16	7	7	45	22	55
Orlando	30	15	10	5	37	20	55
Kaizer	30	15	5	10	37	32	50
Free State	30	12	11	7	38	24	47
Golden Arrows	30	13	7	10	44	28	46
Bidvest	30	13	7	10	42	33	46
Ajax	30	13	7	10	36	34	46
AmaZulu	30	12	6	12	33	33	42
Mamelodi	30	11	7	12	28	28	40
Santos	30	10	9	11	28	31	39
Moroka	30	10	7	13	32	39	37
Maritzburg	30	10	6	14	34	53	36
Platinum	30	8	11	11	35	40	35
Bloemfontein	30	8	9	13	34	38	33
Thanda	30	10	3	17	40	58	33
Bay (R)	30	5	6	19	26	56	21

TUNISIA

May 13: Sfaxien 1 Monastir 1; Hammam-Sousse 0 Kasserine 0; Gafsa 0 Marsa 0; Stade Tunisien 2 Bizertin 0; Jendouba 1 Club Africain 1; Esperance 4 Etoile Sahel 1; Hammam-Lif 2 Olympique 0.

TUNISIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance	26	18	6	2	50	21	60
Club Africain	26	16	9	1	39	14	57
Etoile Sahel	26	15	8	3	48	17	53
Sfaxien	26	11	10	5	33	24	43
Monastir	26	9	8	9	23	24	35
Stade Tunisien	26	9	7	10	30	31	34
Ham-Lif	26	8	6	12	28	43	30
Ham-Sousse	26	4	14	8	20	26	26
Bizertin	26	5	11	10	15	25	26
Olympique	26	6	7	13	13	24	25
Gafsa	26	4	13	9	18	33	25
Kasserine	26	5	9	12	16	26	24
Marsa (R)	26	4	10	12	14	24	22
Jendouba (R)	26	3	12	11	11	26	21

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

May 6: Pakhtakor (Uzb) 2 Al Ahli (UAE) 0; Saba Battery (Irn) 0 Al Hilal (Sau) 1.
May 20: Al Ahli 3 Saba Battery 5; Al Hilal 2 Pakhtakor 0.

GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal	6	4	2	0	10	4	14
Pakhtakor	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Saba Battery	6	1	2	3	7	9	5
Al Ahli	6	0	1	5	6	14	1

Group B

May 6: Al Shabab (Sau) 1 Al Gharafa (Qat) 0.
May 20: Persepolis (Irn) 1 Al Shabab 0.

GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Persepolis	4	2	1	1	5	6	7
Al Shabab	4	2	1	1	4	2	7
Al Gharafa	4	1	0	3	7	8	3

Al Sharjah (UAE) withdrew after four games; results annulled

Group C

May 5: Esteghlal (Irn) 1 Al Ittihad (Sau) 1; Umm Salal (Qat) 2 Al Jazira (UAE) 2.
May 19: Al Ittihad 7 Umm Salal 0; Al Jazira 2 Esteghlal 2.

GROUP C – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ittihad	6	3	3	0	14	4	12
Umm Salal	6	2	2	2	6	13	8
Al Jazira	6	0	5	1	6	7	5
Esteghlal	6	0	4	2	6	8	4

Group D

May 5: Al Shabab (UAE) 2 Sepahan (Irn) 1; Al Ettifaq (Sau) 4 Bunyodkor (Uzb) 0.
May 19: Bunyodkor 0 Al Shabab 0; Sepahan 3 Al Ettifaq 0.

GROUP D – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ettifaq	6	4	0	2	15	8	12
Bunyodkor	6	2	2	2	5	9	8
Sepahan	6	2	1	3	9	7	7
Al Shabab	6	2	1	3	6	11	7

Group E

May 6: Nagoya Grampus (Jap) 4 Ulsan Hyundai (SKo) 1; Newcastle Jets (Aus) 2 Beijing Guoan (Chn) 1.
May 20: Beijing Guoan 1 Nagoya Grampus 1; Ulsan Hyundai 0 Newcastle Jets 1.

GROUP E – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nagoya	6	3	3	0	10	4	12
Newcastle	6	3	1	2	6	5	10
Ulsan	6	2	0	4	4	10	6
Beijing	6	1	2	3	4	5	5

Group F

May 5: Seoul (SKo) 5 Sriwijaya (Ins) 1.
May 6: Shandong Luneng (Chn) 0 Gamba Osaka (Jap) 1.
May 20: Gamba Osaka 1 Seoul 2; Sriwijaya 4 Shandong Luneng 2.

GROUP F – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gamba	6	5	0	1	17	4	15
Seoul	6	3	1	2	14	11	10
Shandong	6	2	1	3	10	9	7
Sriwijaya	6	1	0	5	7	24	3

Group G

May 5: Kashima Antlers (Jap) 3 Suwon Bluewings (SKo) 0; Singapore Armed Forces (Sin) 1 Shanghai Shenhua (Chn) 1.
May 19: Suwon Bluewings 3 Singapore Armed Forces 1; Shanghai Shenhua 1 Kashima Antlers 1.

GROUP G – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kashima	6	4	1	1	16	6	13
Suwon	6	4	0	2	12	8	12
Shanghai	6	2	2	2	9	8	8
Armed Forces	6	0	1	5	4	19	1

Group H

May 5: Pohang Steelers (SKo) 3 Central Coast Mariners (Aus) 2; Tianjin Teda (Chn) 3 Kawasaki Frontale (Jap) 1.
May 19: Central Coast Mariners 0 Tianjin Teda 1; Kawasaki Frontale 0 Pohang Steelers 2.

GROUP H – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pohang	6	3	3	0	7	3	12
Kawasaki	6	3	1	2	10	7	10
Tianjin	6	2	2	2	6	5	8
Central Coast	6	0	2	4	5	13	2

Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round

AFC CUP

Group A

Apr 7: Al Ahed (Leb) 3 Al Tilal (Yem) 0; Neftchi (Uzb) 1 Busaiteen (Bhr) 1.
Apr 21: Al Tilal 2 Al Ahed 1; Busaiteen 2 Neftchi 2.
May 5: Busaiteen 3 Al Tilal 0; Neftchi 2 Al Ahed 1.
May 19: Al Ahed 1 Busaiteen 1; Al Tilal 0 Neftchi 5.

IRAN

New bosses needed

Esteghlal and Persepolis are on the lookout for new head coaches after Amir Ghalenoei quit league champions Esteghlal and Nelo Vingada could only lead Persepolis to fifth place.

LEBANON

Ahed join Nejmeh

Al Ahed beat Shabab Al Sahel 2-0 in the Cup Final with goals from Samer Zeineddine and Bassem Marmar.

Ahed will now join league champions Al Nejmeh in next year's AFC Cup.

SAUDI ARABIA

King's Cup victors

Al Shabab thrashed nine-man Al Ittihad 4-0 in the Final of the King's Cup. Goalkeeper Mabrouk Zayed and Saleh Saqri, who also scored an own goal, were sent off for league champions Ittihad. Nasser Al Shamrani, Hassan Moad and Faisal Al Sultan also scored.

UAE

Ahli first winners

Al Ahli beat the reigning champions Al Shabab 3-1 to win the inaugural re-branded league title.

King's men...Al Shabab

1,037,702 record number of fans who watched Asian Champions League group games this year

GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Busaiteen	6	3	3	0	14	7	12
Neftchi	6	3	2	1	12	9	11
Al Ahed	6	2	1	3	13	10	7
Al Tilal	6	1	0	5	3	16	3

Group B

Apr 7: Al Hilal (Yem) 0 Safa (Leb) 1; Al Zawra'a (Irq) 2 Al Suwaiq (Oma) 0.
Apr 21: Al Suwaiq 0 Al Zawra'a 1; Safa 0 Al Hilal 1.
May 5: Al Hilal 1 Al Zawra'a 1; Safa 1 Al Suwaiq 0.
May 19: Al Suwaiq 3 Al Hilal 1; Al Zawra'a 2 Safa 1.

GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Zawra'a	6	4	1	1	8	3	13
Safa	6	4	0	2	5	3	12
Al Hilal	6	2	1	3	5	7	7
Al Suwaiq	6	1	0	5	3	8	3

Group C

Apr 7: Al Arabi (Kuw) 4 Al Mabarrah (Leb) 2; Al Orouba (Oma) 1 Arbil (Irq) 1.
Apr 21: Al Mabarrah 2 Al Arabi 1; Arbil 3 Al Orouba 0.
May 5: Al Orouba 1 Al Arabi 1; Arbil 3 Al Mabarrah 2.
May 19: Al Arabi 2 Arbil 0; Al Mabarrah 0 Al Orouba 1.

GROUP C – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Arabi	6	3	2	1	11	6	11
Arbil	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
Al Orouba	6	2	2	2	6	7	8
Al Mabarrah	6	2	0	4	7	12	6

Group D

Apr 7: Al Karama (Syr) 3 Al Wihdat (Jor) 1; Mohun Bagan (Ind) 0 Kuwait SC (Kuw) 1.
Apr 21: Al Wihdat 3 Al Karama 1; Kuwait SC 6 Mohun Bagan 0.
May 5: Al Karama 2 Kuwait SC 1; Al Wihdat 5 Mohun Bagan 0.
May 19: Kuwait SC 1 Al Wihdat 0; Mohun Bagan 0 Al Karama 4.

GROUP D – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait SC	6	4	1	1	12	4	13
Al Karama	6	4	0	2	12	7	12
Al Wihdat	6	3	1	2	12	7	10
Mohun Bagan	6	0	0	6	1	19	0

Group E

Apr 7: Al Faisaly (Jor) 1 Al Majd (Syr) 2; Muharraq (Bhr) 1 Dempo (Ind) 1.
Apr 21: Al Majd 4 Al Faisaly 3; Dempo 0 Muharraq 1.
May 5: Al Faisaly 3 Muharraq 2; Al Majd 2 Dempo 1.
May 19: Dempo 3 Al Faisaly 1; Muharraq 2 Al Majd 3.

GROUP E – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Majd	6	4	1	1	12	9	13
Dempo	6	3	1	2	10	8	10
Muharraq	6	1	3	2	7	8	6
Al Faisaly	6	1	1	4	11	15	4

Group F

Apr 7: PSMS Medan (Ins) 1 VB (Mdv) 0; South China (HK) 2 Johor (Mly) 0.
Apr 21: Johor 1 South China 4; VB 1 PSMS Medan 2.
May 5: PSMS Medan 2 South China 2; VB 2 Johor 0.
May 19: Johor 0 PSMS Medan 1; South China 2 VB 1.

GROUP F – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South China	6	5	1	0	15	5	16
PSMS Medan	6	4	1	1	9	7	13
VB	6	1	1	4	5	7	4
Johor	6	0	1	5	2	12	1

Group G

Apr 7: Hanoi ACB (Vie) 0 Chonburi (Tha) 2; Kedah (Mly) 2 Eastern Athletic (HK) 0.
Apr 21: Chonburi 6 Hanoi ACB 0; Eastern Athletic 3 Kedah 3.
May 5: Eastern Athletic 2 Chonburi 1; Kedah 7 Hanoi ACB 0.
May 19: Chonburi 3 Kedah 1; Hanoi ACB 3 Eastern Athletic 0.

GROUP G – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chonburi	6	5	0	1	17	4	15
Kedah	6	2	1	3	14	10	7
Eastern Ath	6	2	1	3	9	13	7
Hanoi ACB	6	2	0	4	6	19	6

Group H

Apr 7: Provincial Electricity Authority (Tha) 1 Binh Duong (Vie) 3; Valencia (Mdv) 0 Home United (Sin) 1.
Apr 21: Binh Duong 1 Provincial Electricity Authority 1; Home United 5 Valencia 1.
May 5: Binh Duong 2 Home United 0; Provincial Electricity Authority 4 Valencia 1.
May 19: Home United 3 Provincial Electricity Authority 1; Valencia 0 Binh Duong 5.

GROUP H – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Binh Duong	6	4	1	1	15	4	13
Home United	6	4	0	2	12	7	12
Provincial E A	6	3	1	2	12	10	10
Valencia	6	0	0	6	3	21	0

Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round

CHINA

May 1: Tianjin 0 Shandong 1; Beijing 0 Shanghai 0.
May 2: Changchun 3 Shenzhen 1; Guangzhou 1 Jiangsu 0; Qingdao 2 Shaanxi 1; Hangzhou 1 Chongqing 1; Henan 1 Chengdu 1.
May 3: Dalian 1 Changsha 0.
May 9: Chengdu 2 Guangzhou 1; Shenzhen 1 Chongqing 0.
May 10: Changchun 2 Beijing 6; Shaanxi 0 Tianjin 1; Jiangsu 2 Dalian 1; Changsha 1 Hangzhou 0; Henan 1 Shandong 3; Shanghai 1 Qingdao 1.
May 15: Guangzhou 1 Shandong 1; Beijing 3 Shenzhen 1; Tianjin 1 Shanghai 1.
May 16: Dalian 1 Chengdu 0; Qingdao 2 Changchun 1; Henan 1 Shaanxi 1; Hangzhou 4 Jiangsu 0.
May 17: Chongqing 0 Changsha 0.
May 23: Shenzhen 2 Changsha 1; Chengdu 2 Hangzhou 1; Changchun 1 Tianjin 0.
May 24: Shaanxi 4 Guangzhou 1; Jiangsu 4 Chongqing 0; Shandong 0 Dalian 0; Shanghai 2 Henan 0; Beijing 3 Qingdao 1.

CHINA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Beijing	10	5	4	1	20	9	19
Shandong	10	5	4	1	14	11	19
Changchun	10	5	2	3	13	12	17
Shanghai	10	4	4	2	14	7	16
Tianjin	10	5	1	4	12	8	16
Dalian	10	5	1	4	11	11	16
Henan	10	4	3	3	11	10	15
Jiangsu	10	4	2	4	12	10	14
Guangzhou	10	4	2	4	15	15	14
Hangzhou	10	4	1	5	13	14	13
Shaanxi	10	3	3	4	10	8	12
Qingdao	10	3	3	4	11	14	12
Changsha	10	2	5	3	5	7	11
Chengdu	10	3	1	6	7	13	10
Shenzhen	10	3	1	6	10	18	10
Chongqing	10	1	3	6	6	17	6

JAPAN

Apr 29: Albirex 2 JEF 2; Kawasaki 4 Kyoto 1; Nagoya 0 Sanfrecce 0; Omiya 0 Montedio 3; Shimizu 2 Urawa 2; Kashiwa 2 Oita 1; Yokohama 1 Jubilo 0; Gamba 4 Tokyo 2; Kashima 1 Vissel 0.
May 2: Jubilo 1 Vissel 0; Montedio 0 Kashiwa 0; Oita 1 Gamba 3; Yokohama 2 Kawasaki 1; Sanfrecce 0 Shimizu 0; Kyoto 0 Nagoya 1; JEF 0 Kashima 2; Tokyo 3 Omiya 2; Urawa 1 Albirex 0.
May 5: Albirex 3 Jubilo 3; Kyoto 2 Yokohama 0; Omiya 3 Oita 0; Vissel 3 Montedio 1; Kashiwa 2 Urawa 3; Sanfrecce 2 Tokyo 0; Shimizu 2 JEF 2.
May 9: Oita 1 Yokohama 2; Jubilo 3 Omiya 1; Tokyo 0 Kyoto 0; JEF 2 Sanfrecce 1; Montedio 0 Albirex 1.
May 10: Urawa 2 Kawasaki 3; Vissel 2 Nagoya 2; Gamba 4 Kashiwa 0; Kashima 2 Shimizu 1.
May 16: Nagoya 1 Omiya 1; Urawa 0 Gamba 0; Kawasaki 2 Jubilo 0; Kashiwa 1 Kashima 2; Sanfrecce 3 Montedio 1; Yokohama 0 Tokyo 1; Shimizu 3 Oita 1.
May 17: Albirex 2 Vissel 0; Kyoto 2 JEF 1.
May 23: Albirex 0 Shimizu 1; Oita 0 Sanfrecce 1; Montedio 0 Kyoto 0; JEF 1 Yokohama 1; Vissel 3 Kashiwa 1.
May 24: Gamba 0 Kashima 1; Tokyo 2 Kawasaki 3; Jubilo 2 Nagoya 1; Omiya 1 Urawa 1.

JAPAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kashima	12	9	2	1	18	8	29
Urawa	13	7	4	2	17	12	25
Albirex	13	6	4	3	20	14	22
Kawasaki	12	6	3	3	23	15	21
Gamba	12	6	2	4	26	16	20
Sanfrecce	13	5	5	3	24	17	20
Nagoya	12	5	4	3	16	14	19
Shimizu	13	4	6	3	13	14	18
Jubilo	13	5	3	5	20	23	18
Kyoto	13	5	2	6	12	14	17
Vissel	13	5	2	6	17	20	17
Montedio	13	4	4	5	15	13	16
Yokohama	13	4	4	5	18	17	16
Tokyo	13	5	1	7	15	22	16
Omiya	13	3	5	5	18	22	14
JEF	13	2	6	5	13	19	12
Kashiwa	13	1	6	6	16	27	9
Oita	13	1	1	11	9	23	4

SOUTH KOREA

May 1: Chunnam 2 Gyeongnam 0; Daejeon 0 Pohang 0.
May 2: Jeju 0 Chonbuk 5; Incheon 2 Daegu 1; Seoul 1 Songnam 0; Gangwon 1 Suwon 1; Busan 1 Ulsan 2.
May 9: Pohang 2 Jeju 2; Chonbuk 2 Seoul 0; Songnam 0 Busan 0.
May 10: Daegu 1 Chunnam 2; Suwon 0 Gwangju 2; Ulsan 0 Incheon 1; Gyeongnam 1 Gangwon 0.
May 16: Gangwon 2 Daegu 2; Seoul 1 Pohang 0; Gwangju 0 Gyeongnam 0.
May 17: Busan 3 Chonbuk 1; Jeju 1 Daejeon 0; Chunnam 1 Ulsan 0; Incheon 1 Songnam 0.
May 23: Chonbuk 0 Incheon 0; Songnam 3 Chunnam 1.
May 24: Daegu 1 Gwangju 3; Daejeon 0 Seoul 2; Gyeongnam 0 Suwon 0; Ulsan 3 Gangwon 4; Pohang 1 Busan 1.

SOUTH KOREA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gwangju	10	7	2	1	17	6	23
Chonbuk	10	6	3	1	21	8	21
Incheon	10	6	3	1	10	3	21
Seoul	11	6	2	3	15	8	20
Chunnam	10	4	4	2	18	18	16
Songnam	10	4	3	3	12	10	15
Busan	11	3	4	4	13	13	13
Gangwon	10	3	4	3	15	17	13
Jeju	10	3	2	5	7	14	11
Pohang	10	1	7	2	12	14	10
Gyeongnam	11	1	7	3	6	11	10
Ulsan	10	2	3	5	9	12	9
Suwon	10	1	4	5	6	12	7
Daejeon	10	1	4	5	7	14	7
Daegu	11	1	4	6	10	18	7

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final, 2nd leg

May 3 - Auckland
Auckland City (NZ) 2 (Jordan pen 56, 58)
Koloale (Sol) 2 (Fa'arodo 40, Saeni 60)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,250. **Ref:** Hauata (Tah)
Auckland 9-4 on agg
Auckland: Spoonley - Friel, Campbell, Williams, Lee (Van Steeden 90), Pritchett, Urlovic (Jordan 50), Young (Mulrooney 86), Feneridis, Vicelich, Nikolic.
Koloale: Ramoni - Houkarawa, Bule, Anisua, Joe,

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

Libertadores hopefuls...Gremio

June 6-10
World Cup qualifiers
June 14-28
Confederations Cup
June 15-29
European Under-21 Championship
June 17
World Cup qualifiers (Asia)
Libertadores Cup semi-finals first legs
June 20-21
World Cup qualifiers (Africa)
June 24
Asian Champions League round of 16
Libertadores Cup semi-finals second leg
July 1
Libertadores Cup Final first leg

Famous Last Words

Who said what and why

"This was a season of too many tactical errors. If we didn't win the title, it's down to Carlo Ancelotti"

Milan owner and Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi goes for the old politician's trick of blaming someone else

"I'm sorry. I allowed myself to be carried away"
Werder Bremen keeper Tim Wiese picks up a megaphone after a Bundesliga fixture to defame defeated opponents Hamburg

"I was only doing my duty"
Reggina doctor Pasquale Favasuli saves the life of defender Andrea Costa after rushing onto the pitch to successfully perform a cardiac massage after the player fell on his head in an aerial duel

"My players were so good they can do whatever they like tonight, even spend the entire night in a disco"
Fiorentina boss Cesare Prandelli following his side's impressive 4-1 dismantling of Roma

Going out...Fiorentina's Gianluca Comotto (left) and Alberto Gilardino celebrate beating Roma

"I think it's crazy, especially in this economic climate"
One-time Real Madrid presidential candidate Juan Onieva explains to a Spanish radio station that he would never spend £100million on Cristiano Ronaldo

"Winning the championship here is like cleaning your teeth – it's a must"
Porto coach Jesualdo Ferreira flosses and wins

Sparkling season...Jesualdo Ferreira

"My contract is with Milan until 2013, not with Carlo Ancelotti"
Kaka denies speculation that he will join his San Siro boss at Chelsea

"I'm still in charge here. For this season and the next"
Claudio Ranieri speaks too soon...a few days later he was fired

"They are all alpha males and need their space. They are all personalities you have to work with"
Jurgen Klinsmann puts the blame for his departure from Bayern Munich firmly at the feet of the club's big-name players

"Generally us Dutch think more about the game than Germans"
Bayern Munich's Dutch skipper Mark Van Bommel clumsily welcomes the appointment of his compatriot Louis Van Gaal as the Bundesliga club's new coach

"Barca are more spectacular but Real are the most effective"
Ex-Madrid keeper Paco Buyo gets it horribly wrong on the eve of his old team's 6-2 thrashing against Barcelona at the Bernabeu

"Perhaps we should clone Xavi, Iniesta and Messi. Just in case of bad times ahead"
Luis Enrique, the coach of Barca B, worries that the Catalans will not be on top forever

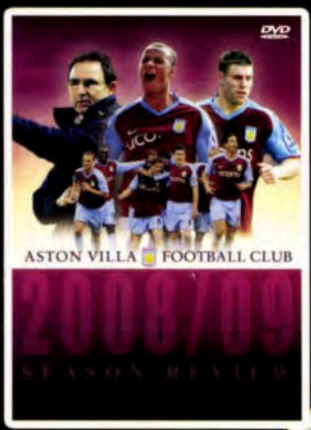
"You sit here, you are in the last four in Europe and, every day, you feel you have killed someone"
Arsene Wenger hits out at critical Arsenal fans

NEXT MONTH SUMMER ISSUE ON SALE JULY 3

CLASSICFOOTBALLSHIRTS.CO.UK

THINK IT'S ALL OVER?

RELIVE THE 2008/09 SEASON ON DVD



ALL ARTWORK TBC

Available to order on DVD from amazon.co.uk®